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ABSTRACT

Each of these issues of "Understanding Our Gifted" is based on the following themes: valuing parents, excellence revisited, networking, talent searches, attention deficit disorders, and mainstreaming the gifted. Feature articles of the six issues include: "'Pushy and Domineering': A Stigma Placed on Parents of Gifted Children" (Lynn C. Cole and Roxana M. DellaVecchia); "Educating Educators" (Cathy Silva); "Making Connections for the At-Risk Gifted Child" (Mary Kay Finholt and Kathy Peckron); "Positive Aspects of Full-Time Programming" (Mary F. Toll); "A Network of Scholars" (Jerry Flack); "The Courage To Network" (Maddi Wallach); "Talent Search: A Driving Force in Gifted Education" (Paula Olszewski-Kubilius); "University-Based Talent Searches for the Gifted" (Mark R. DeLong); "Gifted Children with Attention Deficit Disorder" (Deirdre V. Lovecky); "The Perplexed Perfectionist" (George W. Dorry); "How Gifted Kids Can Survive in 'Inclusion' Classrooms" (Susan Winebrenner); and "Challenging Ben" (Barbara Gilman and Linda Greene). In addition to the feature articles, the issues occasionally contain interviews or poetry, and each issue contains recurring columns, such as "Hidden Gifted Learner," "Parenting the Gifted," "Instructional Perspectives," "The Reading Room," "Bright Beginnings," "Personality Plus," "The Highly Gifted," "Creative Ventures and Encounters," "From Parent to Parent," "Kaleidoscope," and "Current Developments in Gifted Education." (Some papers contain references.) (JDD)

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UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED®

Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

September—October, 1993

Volume 6, Issue 1

"Pushy and Domineering": A Stigma Placed on Parents of Gifted Children

Lynn C. Cole, Ph.D. & Roxana M. DellaVecchia, Ph.D.

It is time for the annual Kindergarten Round-Up. Carli and her mother are excited about this upcoming event. Carli's mother reflects with pride about all the things Carli has already learned, and has high hopes for how much Carli will continue to grow intellectually throughout her formal schooling. Her wish list also extends to other qualities Carli needs to be a happy and contributing member of society: self-fulfillment, well-roundedness, empathy, love, and friendliness.

*Carli is looking forward to the puppet show by the first grade class, a tour of the building, and a promise of cookies and juice at the end of the day. These are things no five year old would want to miss. Carli also is eager to have a chance to tell the teachers what she has learned. Yet, by the end of the event Carli has not had a chance to talk about the things that interest her: **The Tales of Peter Rabbit,** why the dinosaurs became extinct, which insects were added to the collection at the Natural History Museum, or about how she chooses fish*

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Educating Educators

Cathy Silva

I had expected my son, Russell, would receive a typical education: a playful year of kindergarten with a beloved teacher, six fun filled years in elementary school, two turbulent years at middle school, ending with four active years in high school preparing for college. Russell, however, did not turn out to be typical. The prepackaged education at the school failed to meet his needs. In time I discovered that meeting his needs would require many and sometimes radical modifications to the package. Since our school had no procedure for identifying and adapting to the children that didn't fit its age-grade lock-step system, these children "fell through the cracks." That is, unless someone advocated for them. In my son's case that advocate has been (and still is) me.

The Child's Experience

The realization that Russell might not tread the traditional path through school began when he finished the first grade. He told us that school was just too boring. He was fed up with being mobbed every day by his classmates for the answers to worksheets. He made up his mind to drop out of school and he was dead serious.

(Continued on page 11)

FROM THE EDITOR

As we begin a new school year, we also initiate the sixth volume of ***Understanding Our Gifted.*** We are very proud of the theoretical and philosophical contributions our journal has made in addition to providing guidance in the parenting, teaching, and counseling of gifted children. We are deeply grateful for all of the positive responses we have received to our last issue on the "Philosophy of Giftedness."

In this issue, we explore attitudes toward parents. Parenting is the most difficult, underpaid, and undervalued job any human being can undertake. Parenting any type of exceptional child complicates this responsibility tenfold. Parents of other exceptional children receive sympathy, support, professional guidance, and assistance from a variety of sources. In contrast, parents of gifted children are regularly made fun of, as if they were some kind of sad joke. Those who patronize or laugh at parents of the gifted do not realize that this is *bigotry*, and just as inappropriate as any other form of prejudice. In an enlightened society desperately trying to learn how to value diverse populations, why is this form of bigotry so invisible?

The first lead article, "Pushy and Domineering," by Lynn Cole and Roxana DellaVecchia, summarizes their study of teachers' perceptions of parents of the gifted compared with parents' self-perceptions. They explain how the breakdown in communication between educators and parents of the gifted occurs and what can be done to bridge that gap. Our second lead article, "Educating Educators," describes Cathy Silva's own personal odyssey in getting an appropriate program for her highly gifted son. Her story is exhausting but has a happy ending. She echoes much of what Lynn and Roxana found in their study. This issue provides much food for thought.

While many of our regular columnists elaborate on our theme of "Valuing Parents," Jerry Flack, Lisa Wright and Stephanie Tolan suggest wonderful children's books that might be considered for holiday gift giving. Speaking of holiday gifts and better communication between home and school, why don't you consider buying a gift subscription to ***Understanding Our Gifted*** for your child's teacher or copies of special issues to give to school board members? We also have a new product line: books to help you with parenting and building your child's self-esteem. If you are working on a book related to gifted children please consider submitting your work to Open Space Communications. We would love to hear from you.

Linda Silverman

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED

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Deirdre V. Lovecky

HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

Three Faces of Empathy

Usually when we think of empathy we refer to an identification with the feelings of other people. Often gifted children and adults who are empathic suffer the pain of others and want to relieve it (compassion). In addition to their affective identification, this type of empathy implies a cognitive process in which the empathic person strives to accurately understand both the feelings and ideas of another. Accurate understanding comes about because of both an imaginative projection by the person of his or her own thoughts and feelings in a similar situation (identification) and because of an openness to the affective projections of the other—sometimes to the point where the empathic person actually feels the other's feelings. This type of empathy can be direct as when a person strives to understand how another person really thinks and feels about an issue. It can also be indirect as when the empathic person takes a witnessing role to show others how the suffering person might feel. An example of a person with indirect empathy is Dorothea Lange, the photographer who documented many of the injustices done to people by uncaring institutions, the government and other people. Her photographs of migrant farm workers during the Depression are especially poignant.

The second type of empathy, less often recognized, has to do with a sensitivity and identification with other living things. In this type of empathy, the person allows the self to be suspended so as to enter into a relationship with the matter to be studied. For example, Barbara McClintock, studying corn genetics, used her empathy to learn the ways of corn. She could feel the corn growing in the field, identify with its characteristics and use her *conation* (an unconscious process that brings material into consciousness) to allow her to recognize the inner workings of the corn chromosomes. She developed theories about how genetics worked based on her empathic understanding; her conceptions were verified many years later when electronic microscopes were invented (Keller, 1983).

The third type of empathy is concerned with non-living things. In this type of empathy, an internal journey that makes use of intuitive and conative processes allows the person to discover the essence of the object being studied. This discovery of essence can be so acute that even if part of the whole is missing, the person can use internal processes to determine the missing parts. For example, understanding the function of an ancient tool might require an empathy with tools in general, with how mechanical things work, with the materials best used to make tools, and with how a particular material might best be used to derive a particular function. Once that is understood, the empathic artisan can recreate the tool and show its probable function in an ancient culture.

Another example of this empathic process of discovery is Stephen Wiltshire, an adolescent artist in England with autism whose drawings of buildings are unusually perceptive and empathic. At one point, in Venice, he drew a view enveloped in mist, putting a window in a dome that did not appear to have one. As the mist rose, the other members of his group which included BBC filming his drawing, saw that the dome indeed had such a window just where he drew it (Wiltshire, 1991, p. 18).

Empathy is an important part of all giftedness. The intellectual, intuitive and affective components of empathy present in the gifted individual to a high degree suggest that this much neglected aspect of giftedness needs as much nurture as other aspects. Indeed, empathy may be the glue that holds the various processes of creative endeavors together.

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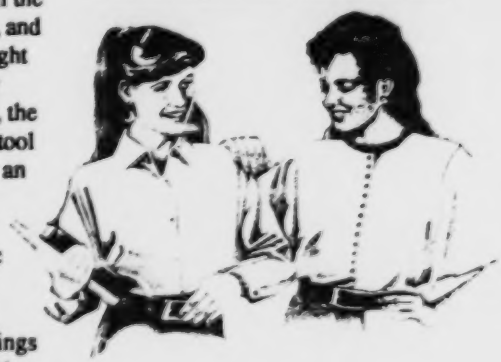
Deirdre V. Lovecky, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Providence, Rhode Island, and a frequent author of articles on giftedness in children and adults.



Annemarie Roeper

PARENTING

What Is a Family?

Every Sunday evening, after dinner, Lisa's family has a special time set aside to talk or play together. Even though the children look wistfully at the turned-off television, Lisa and Larry enjoy the get-together. Dad and Mom are ready to start. Little Bobby toddles in with a spoon in his hand. Busily, he walks over to Lisa, pokes her with a spoon, and says, "Mine!" Then he goes to Larry and with a satisfied smile, pokes him and says, "Mine!" Now he grins at his father, "Mine!" And finally he crawls on his mother's lap, chuckling, "Mine, mine, mine!" Their mother, who is a psychologist, smiles too, and says, "Now you see an example of the self-centeredness of the very young."

Larry: "What does 'self-centered' mean?"

Mom: "When you think you're the center of the world and think only of yourself."

Lisa: "But Mom, I think grown-ups understand the big words but not the wiseness of little children. He is doing just the opposite. He is learning how every member of our family belongs together."

Dad: "But what he's saying is that he owns everyone."

Lisa: "No, Dad, he's saying we all belong together. I feel the same way. You belong to me. You are my father. And I belong to you. I am your daughter. Nothing can ever change that."

Larry: "And you are my sister. And nothing can change that. I'm not sure that's so great. I can never finish my computer games when you are around. And, and, and..."

Dad: "Should we talk tonight about what it means to you to have to live with Lisa and have her interrupt your computer games?"

Lisa: "No, I would like to talk about what it means to be a family." Larry consents reluctantly.

Mom: "Why don't we each start by telling what we think the family is. Larry, would you like to start?"

Larry: "I think you'll be surprised at me. I love my family, even though I get annoyed at everybody. Bobby runs between my legs; Lisa bothers me; Mom makes me set the table; Dad won't let me use his tools. But I feel you all like me and you'll never leave me. And we belong together. Just like Bobby said, 'Mine, mine, mine.'"

Lisa: "I want to tell you something I never told you before because it's silly. I often feel I'm like a flower. Like the more I grow and learn, the more I will be just myself and maybe I'll even become pretty. But flowers grow in soil, so where's my soil? It must be my home and my family. Of course, Larry, I fight with you, because I know you'll always be my brother. If I fight with my friend, Amy, she could stop being my friend."

Dad: "I'm really touched by what you two are saying." He has tears in his eyes. "Family relations are very confusing. They're not always wonderful, but I think the main thing is that we all seem to feel we belong together."

Mom: "Everybody seems to have a role in the family. I think I'm the family worrier. I care so much about everybody and I often seem to be concerned that something might happen."

Lisa: "You know how Mary spends so much time at our house. I've told her how I feel like a flower. She said that if she thought of herself as a flower she would be afraid someone would step on her or wouldn't water her. Her parents fight a lot and they don't seem to notice her."

Mom: "It sounds like they don't have the invisible strings that hold our family together. These strings are like rubber bands; they will twist and stretch but never break."

The family is the child's first community. It is the model for their future—the basis from which they learn about the world. The modern family takes many forms, yet in any form the family can provide the invisible rubber bands that allow children to grow in safety.

Dr. Annemarie Roeper is a consultant on the gifted in Oakland, California, and author of the book, ***Educating Children for Life.*** Co-founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the ***Roeper Review***, Annemarie has inspired a worldwide focus on global awareness in gifted education.

Shirley W. Schiever

INSTRUCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Teachers of the gifted have an uncommon bond with parents of their students. I believe they also value these parents to an exceptional degree. In this column I will explain how I believe this bond comes about and why these parents are especially valued.

Teachers of the gifted fill a lonely professional niche. In the faculty lounge, the topic of conversation centers on students who cannot or will not learn, rather than on voracious learners who consume curriculum at an alarming rate. (Alarming when teachers must locate or generate the material themselves, frequently for several grade levels of gifted learners.) The majority of teachers may believe that (a) programs for gifted students are not necessary; (b) all gifted students are, or should be, model students; and (c) teaching smart students all day is an easy, fun, and satisfying task. Teachers of the gifted know and are constantly reminded of these beliefs, and consequently tend to listen a great deal and talk very little about their professional concerns for their students. As they listen, they feel as different from their colleagues as gifted students feel from their age peers and parents of gifted children feel from other parents.

In the same way, parents of gifted children have a lonelier-than-usual parenting job. As has been noted, complaining about a child who is too smart for the school work being offered is like complaining about not being able to gain weight. To people who have not experienced the angst of raising a gifted child, you cannot be too thin, nor have a child that is too smart. When parent and teacher of the gifted meet, they both have a rare opportunity to discuss the child's needs with someone who has at least some understanding of them and of the difficulty of meeting these needs. Parent/teacher conferences can become an oasis of support in the desert of indifference, lack of understanding, and outright hostility both parties may face on occasion.

Many times, teachers and parents of gifted children have similar goals. In essence, they both want what is best for these children and to help them become all they can be. In focusing on how to encourage, support, and instruct, they may find having an ally not only refreshing, but valuable. As parent and teacher each search for the means of carrying out their part of this endeavor, they may turn to each other as resources. Through sharing, discussing, or dissecting ideas, the bond between teacher and parent strengthens, and they may come to consider each other friends.

Educators and parents of gifted students are uncommon people striving to meet uncommon needs and reach uncommon goals. Through these dynamics, an uncommon bond is forged; a bond that is uncommonly valuable and valued.

Shirley W. Schiever, Ph.D., is a curriculum specialist at the Fine Arts Magnet School in Tucson, Arizona, and the author of ***A Comprehensive Approach to Teaching Thinking.***

My Kindergarten

I loved to draw rainbows, but teacher didn't like them very much
so I stopped drawing.
I wanted to read big people's books, but I had to learn the alphabet again.
I did not want to read anymore.
I wanted to learn more addition and subtraction,
but she made me count to ten.
I did not like math anymore.
But teacher still did not like me very much.

Marcus Dupona, Age 6

Stephanie S. Tolan

THE READING ROOM

This visit we are venturing into different worlds—both the authors we discuss today are Australian, and both write science fiction. The subject of their books is human intelligence. These two books give readers plenty of food for thought about science, research, intelligence, and the human species, so arrogantly known to itself as *homo sapiens sapiens*.

A Cage of Butterflies, by Brian Caswell, is meant for middle grade to young adult readers. The setting of the novel is "The Farm," a scientific research center more properly known as the Institute, where have been gathered a group of very highly gifted adolescents. The Institute is part school, part camp, part laboratory, and the children have come willingly, as their extraordinary minds have given them all extreme difficulty relating to the "normal" world. Here they have each other (a kind of group identity); a young scientist who studies, but also cares about them; and their own work/learning.

Another project at the Institute, highly classified, involves a group of seven year olds, apparently autistic and totally uncommunicative, referred to by everyone as "The Babies." These children are far behind their chronological age in physical development, but their autism masks an intelligence far more extreme than that of the adolescents—an intelligence that uses a powerful form of telepathy. The Babies' intelligence is not solely intellectual, but includes a deep ability to connect—to love and create love in return.

The two scientists in charge of the Institute, greedy, self-serving and determined to discover the secret of the younger children's minds, use research methods that endanger their lives. The Babies' only hope is to rely on the abilities of the older children, whom they teach a form of their own mental communication—a far richer sort than mere linear language. But is there any place in the regular world for their unique reality? Most readers will find this a real page turner.

Brain Child, by George Turner, is an eerie, disturbing and challenging book for adults. However, gifted high school students are likely to be intrigued both by its exciting plot and its extremely complex contemplation of the nature, possibilities, and dangers of extreme intelligence.

The story takes place in Australia in the Twenty-first Century, many years after a government project called "Project IQ" used genetic engineering to create sets of super brilliant *in vitro* siblings. Three groups, each comprised of two boys and two girls, were successfully reared to adolescence. Group A were highly intellectual (the scientists), Group B highly creative (the artists) and Group C represented a total departure from the human species, their intellects so vastly beyond those of humans, that there was almost no possibility of communication between them and their creators/captors. Under mysterious circumstances, Group C commits suicide before reaching adulthood. Twenty-five years later, the illegitimate son of a Group B member (the narrator of the story) is called upon to find Group C's "legacy," the presumed instructions for more perfect genetic tampering. A highly complex thriller.

Both stories deal with the dangers and moral questions of research on human subjects, both with the nature of intelligence and the isolation of extreme giftedness. Like *Jurassic Park*, *Brain Child* (a contemporary *Frankenstein*) also considers the vast complexity of reality, the effects of chance, and the arrogance of scientists venturing into territory beyond their ken and acting beyond their ability to envision consequences. Each is a "good read" that should lead to interesting and fruitful discussions.

Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, ***Guiding the Gifted Child.***

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS

Tell Me a Story: Images of Giftedness in Multicultural Picture Books

"Plea-ea-se, just one more story!" What parent has not heard (and responded) to this plea repeatedly during his or her child's early years? It has been well documented that young gifted children are especially voracious story listeners. It is not unusual to observe a baby whose first word is "book," a fatigued parent reading a tenth or eleventh book to a bright-eyed, engrossed toddler, a three year old who selects her favorite stories by looking only at the titles on the spine of the books, or a four year old who is deeply engaged in complex chapter books. It is evident, then, that these young children respond consistently to books with great enthusiasm. The visual delight, the rhythm of the language, and the magic of the stories create an experience that is anticipated each day.

Perhaps this unrelenting need (*yes, it is a necessity*) for books arises from the child's desire to explore ideas and situations that reinforce and extend her own experiences. Therefore, as parents respond to their child's developing literacy, the stories offered should depict a rich and authentic view of our world community. This parental role is crucial and ensures that the child will be enriched by a wide range of stories that reflect our multicultural heritages. Especially important is exposure to picture books that showcase young children from diverse backgrounds who exemplify characteristics of giftedness. That is, characters who are multidimensional, creative, competent, authentic, and adept problem solvers. Through exposure to this literature, a youngster will not only develop an appreciation of the many faces of giftedness, but at the same time identify with many of the issues raised in the books. For example, *Amazing Grace* portrays a young African-American girl who has a vivid imagination. Grace loves to pretend to be storybook and historical characters. Her great triumph, however, is when, after great determination, she is awarded the role of Peter in her school play, Peter Pan. Young gifted girls will identify with Grace's tenacity and her imagination, and will feel reassured that girls can do anything.

Sharing selected books will affirm a child's feelings, clarify issues, and bolster the child's self-image. However, these outcomes are achieved only when parents take the time to raise questions and discuss the stories. After the story telling, the listener should be encouraged to analyze and evaluate the character's actions and speculate about what he might have done in that situation. The strength of the character should be discussed and the child should be encouraged to "see himself" in the character. Exchanges such as these will offer a greater understanding of many worthwhile issues, thereby providing the child with opportunities for intellectual and moral growth. Certainly, a worthwhile endeavor!

To get you started, here is a short list of selected picture books that portray diverse images of giftedness:

- Altman, L. (1993). *Amelia's Road.* New York: Lee & Low. **(Latino)**
- Bang, M. (1981). *Tye May and the Magic Brush.* New York: Mulberrry. **(Asian)**
- Castaneda, O. (1993). *Abuela's Weave.* New York: Lee & Low. **(Latino)**
- Dorros, A. (1991). *Abuela.* New York: Dutton Children's Books. **(Latino)**
- Goble, P. (1978). *The Girl Who Loved Horses.* New York: Macmillan. **(Native American)**
- Hoffman, M. (1991). *Amazing Grace.* New York: Dial. **(African-American)**
- Hopkinson, D. (1993). *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf. **(African-American)**
- Isadora, R. (1979). *Ben's Trumpet.* New York: Greenwillow. **(African-American)**
- Keller, H. (1992). *Island Baby.* New York: Greenwillow. **(West Indian)**
- Markun, P. (1993). *The Little Painter of Sabana Grande.* New York: Maxwell Macmillan. **(Latino)**
- Moss, T. (1993). *I Want To Be.* New York: Dial. **(African-American)**
- Stewart, D. (1993). *The Dove.* NewYork: Greenwillow. **(African)**
- Merrill, J. (1992). *The Girl Who Loved Caterpillars.* New York: Philomel. **(Asian)**
- Williams, V. (1984). *Music, Music for Everyone.* New York; Greenwillow. **(Latino)**
- Winter, J. (1991). *Diego.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf. **(Latino)**

Lisa Wright, Ed.D., is Director of the Leta Hollingworth Center and an Adjunct Assistant Professor of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University.

for her aquarium. Instead, she has been asked to identify her colors and shapes, count to ten, talk about and draw pictures of her family, jump and hop, and build with blocks.

Meanwhile, Carli's mother has been in another part of the expansive gymnasium. She has informed the teacher that Carli was walking at 10 months, talking in sentences before she was 18 months old, and reading before her third birthday. She also has mentioned Carli's analytical skills, such as how she selects fish for her aquarium, and her understanding of the various extinction theories of the dinosaurs. Carli's mother searches the teacher's face for some acknowledgment that such behaviors are unusual, and finds none. She then poses the question, "Do you think my child is gifted?" There is a smile and the reply, "We like to think that all of the children in our school are gifted."

"All children are gifted," implies that all children are the same—there are no notable differences that need to be addressed instructionally. While this statement is intended to convey the teacher's desire to make all children feel special, it is, in fact, insensitive and abrasive. Sentiments like this "homogenize" children and support parents' worries that their children's unique strengths, and even weaknesses, will not be acknowledged. Consequently, parents are left with two options: quietly supplement with enrichment at home, or strongly advocate for appropriate education at school. Unfortunately, when parents choose the latter option, educators often perceive them not as "assertive and persistent," but rather as "pushy and domineering."

Carli's mother, like the parents in our study (Cole & DellaVecchia, 1992), left the gymnasium feeling awkward and embarrassed that she had suggested her daughter might be "gifted." Like the parents we studied, she noted that her daughter was a lot like she was as a child; it seemed to her that Carli was "intellectually advanced" beyond the curriculum for kindergarten. She worried that her daughter would be destined to a year of learning shapes, colors, numbers, and the letters of the alphabet—again. She might have wondered if part of the communication problem was the teacher's thinking that her only interest was in Carli's academic abilities—without realizing the emotional and social goals also on her wish list that day.

Parent Advocacy

In 1983, *A Nation at Risk* identified gifted students as an endangered population, generally achieving less than anticipated in our nation's schools. That same document directed parents to be advocates for their children, to refuse to accept less than the best, and to be vigilant and active in their children's education. More recently, *Beyond Rhetoric* (Carnegie Council on Children and Youth, 1991) continued to support the iterations of the previous decade—that parents must be involved in the education of their children. Yet, the motives for this involvement by parents of gifted children often are misinterpreted, thereby creating the stereotypical image of "Behind every gifted kid, there is a pushy parent!"

Many parents of gifted children . . . prepare for advocacy by consulting with experts, reading, networking , and volunteering in the schools.

What do we know about parents of gifted children that explains the intensity of their advocacy and sheds light on this stereotype? We know parents are motivated to nurture their children. Bloom (1985) supports this in his study, *Developing Talent in Young People*. His contention is that behind successful adults with exceptional talent were the guiding hands of parents. He tells of sacrifices parents made to provide more challenge for their children—seeking tutors, mentors, or coaches as their children's talents demanded additional attention. Bloom describes parents of gifted children as

> *...**child oriented** and willing to devote their time, their resources, and their energy to giving each of their children the best conditions they could provide for them. Almost no sacrifice was too great if they thought it would help their children's development. (p. 510)*

We know parents of gifted children seek to nurture their children's social and emotional development, not only their intellectual development. Many parents in our study report having strong altruistic goals for their children (Cole & DellaVecchia, 1992). However, concern for their children's overall development is often overshadowed by the battles surrounding the children's academic needs .

Another thing we know about many parents of gifted children is that they are intelligent, educated, and articulate. They prepare for advocacy by consulting with experts, reading, networking, and volunteering in the schools. This makes these parents not only bright, but well-informed about the issues. Consequently, they may appear intimidating in their advocacy for their children.

We also know that parents of gifted children often find themselves as lone advocates—acting as individuals without the solidarity of a group. Because our nation still has not

embraced gifted children as a group in need, there is a widespread lack of organizational support speaking for parents and their gifted children. Being lone advocates, coupled with the intensity and fervor of noble intentions, makes parents of gifted children targets for criticism and misunderstanding.

Additionally, we know parents are hesitant about using the term *gifted* in reference to their own children and in the public realm. They are fearful of animosity from those who interpret the term as a value statement, rather than as a descriptor of intellectual ability. As a result, these parents resort to using the term only when an advocacy need arises, and then, only with great caution (Cole & DellaVecchia, 1992).

And finally, we know that parents of gifted children are the ones who identify their children's talents in the earliest stages of development (Bloom, 1985; Ehrlich, 1982). Furthermore, our study indicates that parents most often seek the support of teachers to confirm the abilities of their children (Cole & DellaVecchia, 1992). When teachers fail to provide this confirmation, parents attempt to persuade teachers to view their children from their own perspectives. To understand the parent point of view is to "see" these gifted children as their parents do—in unrestricted and informal settings—in places where the children's talents can surface and be nurtured. Most teachers do not have this opportunity. Instead, teachers see the children only in formal, restricted, and linear classroom settings.

The Communication Gap

Such mutually valid, yet narrow perceptions, place teachers and parents on different wave lengths in their communication with each other. Some teachers perceive parents' accounts of their children as exaggerated; this perception blinds them to the need to provide appropriate educational adaptations. Other teachers may be open to parental interpretations, and willing to adapt the curriculum, but unable due to administrative constraints. In either situation, parents feel betrayed, and indeed alone, in acquiring educational and emotional support for themselves and their children.

The realization that continual progress promised by schools is an entitlement for all children except their own plunges parents into an intensified, singularly focused advocacy effort. The intense advocacy of frustrated and overwrought parents can spark a defensive posture from teachers. Teachers often respond with displaced anger, due to a lack of resources or support, adopting stereotypical views of the parents of gifted children.

One of the greatest contributors to the parental stigma of "pushy and domineering" is the communication gap that occurs at the parent/teacher conference. Most parent-initiated conferences focus on the child's exceptionality—his or her giftedness. Teachers, on the other hand, usually initiate conferences when a child's behavior is an issue. Parents often perceive their child's bad behavior to be directly related to insufficient stimulation in the classroom. Therefore, whether parent or teacher initiated, most conferences eventually return to the topic of the child's exceptionality. However, much is left unsaid in the typical conference with parents of gifted children. The time constraints of most conferences, and the urgency of the matter at hand, prompt a singular focus on the child's intellectual development. The conference circumstances seldom allow parents to express their long range visions and concerns for their child's emotional and social well-being. All this leads educators to perceive, erroneously, that parents view exceptional intelligence as the only important aspect of their children. In truth, many parents do view their child's giftedness as the dominant influence in the school experience. They realize that this exceptionality has an impact on their child's *total* life experience, which includes the academic, social, emotional, and behavioral realms.

The stereotypical image of parents of gifted children seems to persist even when teachers receive training in the characteristics and educational needs of gifted students (Cole & DellaVecchia, 1992). It appears that in the course of teacher training, sensitivity to parents of gifted children is either glossed over or neglected. Likewise, in the majority of schools where educational programs for the gifted occur, or where teachers assume some responsibility for identifying or instructing gifted children, there are few programs to address the needs of parents of gifted children.

Special education regulations encourage parents of children with disabilities to become involved in the development of appropriate educational programs; however, such nationwide encouragement does not exist for parents of gifted children. There is not the same purposeful coordination of efforts to build partnerships between the teachers and parents of gifted children. Consequently, parents who choose to become involved in developing educational programs for their exceptionally advanced children are met with animosity, complacency, or an overwhelming sense of intrusion. Such feelings are further exacerbated when teachers associate requests for differential accommodations for gifted children as an implication that they aren't "doing their jobs."

"PUSHY AND DOMINEERING" Continued from page 9

Effective Partnerships

It seems as if in all directions there are roadblocks to the dialogue required to create a nurturing environment for gifted children. As educators and parents we should feel some distress that purposeful dialogue is lost, and our children are placed in the middle. Partnerships in the education of gifted children—that is, partnerships between educators and parents—must be forged to create better programs for gifted children, and to open channels of communication. These partnerships need to be made from both sides.

★ **Active Listening**—displaying an interest in and gaining insight into the teacher's perceptions, and probing unsolicited remarks for more information.

★ **Comprehensive Focus**—sharing goals that include more than just intellectual accomplishments, conveying the importance of children's physical, social, and emotional development, and inquiring about children's weaknesses, as well as strengths.

For more effective communication with parents, training for educators should focus on:

Partnerships between educators and parents must be forged to create better programs for gifted children and to open channels of communication.

A vehicle for structuring more effective partnerships lies in both teacher and parent education. Teacher training, while it addresses developmental and learning aspects of gifted children, also needs to address aspects of parenting gifted children. It is important to understand parental anxieties and concerns, as these concerns are critical to the successful education of gifted children. Just as important, parents need training in ways to approach educators. Parent training seminars should include information about gifted programs, and should also address effective advocacy.

Parent and teacher education should assist in breaking the mold of stereotypical perceptions. For more effective communication with educators, parent training should focus on:

★ **Tactful Communication**—valuing the teacher's time, assessing appropriate opportunities, and interacting assertively, not aggressively.

★ **Tactful Communication**—valuing parental perspectives of their own children's abilities, respecting their knowledge of issues surrounding gifted education, and dialoguing with parents as equals.

★ **Active Listening**—displaying an interest in gaining insight into parent perceptions, probing for more information on how children function in non-classroom settings, and seeking suggestions for nurturing interests and strengths in the classroom setting.

★ **Comprehensive Focus**—acknowledging intellectual abilities and stating goals that reflect continual progression, highlighting children's achievements in other than academic areas, addressing children's weaknesses in relation to normal child development, and presenting a plan for compensating weaknesses.

Ultimately, educators and parents must build a relationship based on trust. Trust implies that *all* children will receive an education that nurtures and challenges their talents. Trust implies that *all* teachers will be identifiers of and nurturers of talented youth. Trust implies that parents will be allowed to question program implementation, not as an attack, but as a parental responsibility. Trust implies that parent/teacher communication will be open and will allow for displays of honesty and mutual vulnerability. Finally, trust implies a true and equal partnership in the education of gifted children.

Awareness of how parents are viewed is only the first step in eliminating the negative image. Training, dialogue, and partnership are necessary to break the barriers separating teachers and parents of gifted children. Only when these are accomplished can an end be put to the stigma of "pushy and domineering."

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I felt panic. How could a child feel ready to be a dropout after the first grade? Why had I not seen how deeply school had affected him? What could I do to change his mind? I acknowledged his decision but asked him if he would please give school another try. I promised Russell that his father and I would advocate for him throughout the year to make sure he had a positive experience. He reluctantly agreed.

After testing his reading level, his teacher reported to us that he was three grades ahead in reading. She had also given him the end-of-the-year test for his present grade. There were some things he didn't know, such as dictionary skills. She felt it was best for him to stay where he was, but we should not worry. She would allow him to read books of his choice when his work was finished. Though we had doubts that this was the answer (I was haunted by a question Russell posed to me when he was still in the first grade: "Mommy, do you ever go to school when they teach you something you don't already know?") we conceded, not knowing what to suggest instead.

"Mommy, do you ever go to school when they teach you something you don't already know?"

By early spring Russell began to complain again about boredom in school. After looking through his textbooks at home it was obvious why school bored him. Then I volunteered to correct papers in his class once a week. This would help me to see him from the teacher's point of view. I could also get a feel for how the other children were performing in his class. (Maybe he wasn't as far ahead as I thought.) Last; we brainstormed with Russell on what changes might help him.

The three of us spoke with his teacher. "Russell has expressed frustration with his school work to us. Could he perhaps have a third grade math book or go to the third grade class for math?" She told us that she had never seen or heard anything that indicated to her that he was unhappy in school. As for the math the answer was, "Sorry, but no."

Could he have a different spelling list? Yes, he could have some different spelling words though she stressed that it was more important for him to "be a boy." At home I tested Russell on the words in the new spelling book she had given him, which was a spelling book for the same grade he was in by a different publisher. He knew all these words as well. I sent the spelling book back to the teacher with a note to that effect. I suggested that his father and I make up a spelling list for him, coordinating it with the science lesson, and sent in a sample for the first week: *Fahrenheit, cumulonimbus, Celsius, barometer*. She called to say she had spoken with the principal about this modification and he had disallowed it. Our spelling words amounted to acceleration. The school had a policy of no acceleration. A brief chat on the phone with the principal confirmed this.

Test Scores

At that point we thought that if we were going to press the school for changes we needed to be clear ourselves about what he needed and what we wanted the school to provide. Our first step was to find out what information the school already had about his aptitude and achievement.

We made an appointment with the school psychologist to look at Russell's records. Russell had all 99 percentiles on achievement tests and a group IQ test of 141, but they didn't think he needed any modifications based on his scores. If observational evidence, parent's perceptions, Russell's complaints and their own testing could not convince them that Russell needed something different, then the next step was to find someone whose opinion they would respect.

We had him tested by a well known local psychologist and the results were similar to those obtained at the school, although his Verbal IQ was 12 points higher. The psychologist did not recommend any type of acceleration. He was not the advocate we had hoped for.

Since schools deal mostly in the verbal domain, surely his Verbal IQ would impress them. What sense did it make to pretend to teach him information he already knew? Why was he required to take the whole year to learn those few things he did not already know? We decided to talk to the superintendent about this policy and our concern with Russell's boredom and growing cynicism with school.

A Verbal IQ of 153 did not move the superintendent. He did not understand why we were concerned with boredom in a child seven years old. Besides, there were enrichment opportunities in every classroom for children who got their work done. (But Russell told us that these "enrichment opportunities" were just more worksheets on books he had already read or about things he already knew.) The superintendent's conclusion was that we had a student-teacher personality conflict and offered to let us pick Russell's teacher next year.

Why would no one take Russell's feelings seriously? Why were our concerns being discounted or brushed aside as unresolvable? We hadn't approached anyone in the school in a demanding way or taken an offensive attitude. What would it take to convince these people that Russell was

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not *surviving* in school, let alone thriving in it?

Precisely Defining the Need

Throughout this time I read prolifically and attended a conference on gifted children. I tracked down the phone numbers of two of the presenters at the conference, Stephanie Tolan and Kathi Kearney. Putting aside my fear of looking foolish, I called them. " He couldn't be highly gifted, could he?" "I think he is," came the answer from Stephanie. "How can you say that? You don't even know my son, and his IQ numbers and achievement scores aren't that high," I argued. "Because you are calling me at my home in Ohio from New York. Parents of moderately gifted children don't take the desperate actions that parents of highly gifted children do." She had hit the nail on the head. I felt desperate, and I had started to act desperately. I called my second "expert," Kathi Kearney. "He needs to be tested on the Stanford-Binet L-M; these WISC-R scores are not the whole story. If three or more WISC-R subtest scores are at or near the ceiling then the student needs to be tested on an instrument with a higher ceiling." Our hearts were telling us to travel to another state for the Stanford-Binet L-M while our heads were questioning whether we were blowing this all out of proportion and wasting a lot of money.

During the last month of the school year we went to see a specialist in another state. We were stunned when Russell's IQ score came back over 40 points above his previous testing and his achievement levels were seven or more grade levels above his current grade placement. It was incomprehensible. There was pride and happiness, but lots more disbelief, and a huge amount of "What will we do?" Back to the literature I went, reading everything I could on how to teach and nurture children with this type of development.

Coping When Advocacy Fails

In the meantime school was simply unbearable and Russell began to get mid-week stomach aches. It just didn't make sense for the nurse to send him home from school after it made him physically sick. It seemed to me that he should come home *before* school made him sick. I asked Russell to think about which days of the week he had activities that he found tolerable and which days bored him the most. Then he choose one day a week to stay home. On his day off we went to the park. I also gave him permission to not do any school work which he felt was inappropriate for him. I told him I didn't care about grades that obviously didn't reflect what he was learning. Russell chose to do the work anyway, but it was his choice. Giving him this control also helped relieve some of the stress he felt.

Then I considered the options for the coming school year. If I sent him back to the elementary school I would have to educate the principal, teacher and probably some others about giftedness. Educating the educators appeared to be a considerable task. In theory, I could force them to do what I thought was right, but did I want him taught by a staff who might resent him because they were being coerced? Was I prepared emotionally to be the kind of assertive, confrontational person it would take to advocate for him in a school that seemed openly resistant? And then there were Russell's feelings to consider. His attitude towards school was one of cynicism and distrust. The odds of getting the next school year to be a good one for Russell did not look good. Our local private school was no better prepared to deal with Russell's special needs. Together we decided to homeschool instead. It wasn't going to be easy. I might not do the best job. But at least I loved him, and accepted him for who he was. He seemed to need that even more than he needed the right curriculum. Nevertheless, despite all the frustration and anger I felt towards the school, I cried as I drove past it. Shattered was my expectation that he would go to school happily, getting lots of A's, having fun in sports and extracurricular activities and me merely being his cheerleader.

Plunging Into Homeschooling

Not knowing where to begin teaching Russell at home we decided to use the by-mail educational planning service of the Center for Talented Youth (CTY) at Johns Hopkins University. Russell took the SCAT (School and College Aptitude Test) and out-of-level STEP (Sequential Test of Educational Progress) tests in English, reading, and mathematics. We got the test results back with a long list of recommendations. It wasn't the precisely detailed teaching prescription I had anxiously hoped it would be, but later these test scores and recommendations turned out to be important documentation of Russell's special needs.

I continued reading journals and books and networking in gifted education and homeschooling. I took a graduate level course for teachers on how to teach gifted children in the regular classroom where I learned all about the modifications schools could make to accommodate gifted children, if they wanted to, as well as strategies for teaching at home.

During the first year of homeschooling I learned about a one-day-a-week

gifted program in a neighboring district for children working a minimum of four grade levels above their present placement. The entrance exam was the SCAT. Russell had already taken the SCAT through CTY, so I didn't need to get my school district's permission for him to take the qualifying exam. But would my school district agree to allow (and to pay for) a homeschooled child to attend a program that they did not offer to their own gifted children and was not in their district?

Anticipating Their Questions

In considering my approach to the school district I tried to imagine what they would have to know in order to be able to make a decision on my request. They would need to know if my request was legal, some of the finer details of the regulations concerning homeschooling as well as the general ones, if the other district would allow my son to participate and what enrollment procedures must be followed. It took many hours of research and phone calls to collect this information.

In my letter to the superintendent requesting permission for Russell to attend the program I acknowledged that this was probably an unprecedented request and that he might have some questions about the legality and protocol for approving and implementing such a request. In a small binder I neatly laid out all that information for him in a question and answer format, documenting each of my answers with either a photocopy of the applicable section of education law or state education procedures and a contact person in the education system. When I got a call from the superintendent he said, "You've done all my work for me! I didn't have to research a thing!" He immediately put my request on the agenda for the school board to vote on, as was the procedure. When the time came for us to address the school board we spoke little, other than to answer their questions. So as not to appear to be bragging about how smart he was we focused exclusively on Russell's need to be with *same-aged intellectual peers* as our reason for wanting him to go to the gifted program rather than due to his academic needs. They must have been sympathetic to the same-aged peer issue because they miraculously voted to pay for Russell to go. The lesson I learned from this was an important one: *make it as easy as possible for them to say "yes"!*

"How long are you going to homeschool?" was a frequent question I heard. I didn't know. One possible strategy was homeschooling him until I felt he was ready emotionally, socially, and academically to attend the middle school. The middle school seemed to have a lot more flexibility and accelerative options already built into its structure. Perhaps the staff there might be a little more understanding of Russell's needs and willing to work with us to find ways to nurture him within the school. Towards the end of our second year of homeschooling we decided to find out if this were true.

When we decided to ask the school to consider him for reentry with accelerated placement I used a similar written approach. I felt the challenge of getting what he needed from the school district would be greater this time though. From my previous meeting with the superintendent I knew what the policy was: no acceleration.

Documenting the Reason

I was concerned the school officials would be overwhelmed by the mountain of documentation and information that I would need to send them in order for them to be properly informed to make a decision on Russell's reentry. I decided to call first essentially to get the school to ask me to send them the information I had. I spoke with the Director of Special Services who would be the initial contact for Russell's reentry. Since the school would need achievement testing in order to determine a proper placement for Russell, I wondered if they would like to see the testing I had had done already. "Sure," was his reply. As we had given some thought as to what type of placement might work for Russell, would he like to see our ideas? "Yes, send those along with the testing. When the tests have been reviewed we will meet with the principal and psychologist to discuss them with you." Did I want him to skip a grade? he probed. (I wanted him to skip more than one.) "Well, we would like to discuss it," I responded. " I just hope you are not coming to us with a list of demands," he told me frankly. "I just hope you aren't going to be a brick wall," I replied. "Our hope is that we can sit down together as a team. We value your input as experienced educators; if you can value ours, then we will work well together."

Why would no one take Russell's feelings seriously? What would it take to convince these people that Russell was not surviving in school, let alone thriving in it?

I then prepared our written request for Russell to reenter school. After a polite letter I included copies of the results of his testing. The amount of documentation of his ability could not be quickly dismissed. Following the tests was our two page outline for an individual education plan (IEP) which included radical acceleration in both grade and specific subjects, the gifted

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program in the other district, attending the middle and high schools, and exemptions from normal requirements for middle school students. These were followed by 15 highlighted articles documenting the appropriateness and success of acceleration and, most importantly, several articles documenting the lack of negative effect of acceleration on the social and emotional development of students who experience it. The last page was a list of the names and addresses of ten professionals I had consulted who were willing to offer assistance in developing an IEP, if we requested it. All of this was preceded by a table of contents. (A friend joked that I had neglected to insert labeled tabs!) This amounted to a one-inch stack of paper which was put into a three ring binder. I made exact duplicates for the psychologist, the principal, the director and ourselves and delivered them to the director's office.

At our meeting with the administrators Russell's capabilities and needs were not questioned. They were prepared to implement the IEP I had written with few modifications. They said that the superintendent was skeptical when they first approached him about it but he readily agreed after he read the information I had given them. "So you actually read the binder?" I asked surprised. "Oh, yes! In fact we studied it!" At the end of the meeting I thanked them for their openmindedness. They explained that their openness had a lot to do with the binder of information I had supplied. The principal confessed that if I had called and said, "My son has a high IQ and I want...," he would have had a different response.

An Advocate to Those Who Will Listen

So much for "plug him in at kindergarten and 13 years later out pops an educated kid"! Every step of Russell's education, and there are more steps than the average, has had to be conceived, researched, planned, orchestrated and paid for. There has been considerable cost in educating myself to be an effective advocate: private testing for Russell, consultations with professionals, subscriptions to professional journals, conferences, the graduate course, books, and long distance phone bills from networking, not to mention my time. It's an ongoing process.

Another parent once scolded me for doing all this work, "It's the school's job ." Maybe it is. But after the amount of time and effort I have put into planning his education I see why the school has not taken the time to do it. And I recognize that the teachers and administrators are likely to be as uneducated as I once was about children with profoundly different intellectual development. I don't have the expectation, therefore, that a school will know what Russell needs and how to provide it. I just hope that they will be willing to listen and learn from someone who does.

Cathy Silva has a bachelor's degree in psychology and is the mother of three children, two of whom have profoundly asynchronous development.

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Linda Silverman

Personality Plus

Parent Bashing

In preparing to write a chapter on "Family Counseling," I read all that I could find in the literature on parenting gifted children. The more I read, the more upset I became. Parents were accused of flaunting their children's IQ scores, being less intelligent than their children and jealous of their abilities, valuing their children only for their gifts rather than for who they are as people, being so awestruck by their children's IQ scores that they forfeit their role as parents, being overly protective or putting too much pressure on their children, and antagonizing teachers with their unreasonable demands. One researcher even suggested that mothers label one of their children as gifted (the "star") for their own narcissistic ego needs!

When I couldn't stand much more, I called Betty Maxwell, the Associate Director of The Gifted Development Center, and said, "I need a reality check. Please don't humor me. Have I been an advocate for parents of the gifted for so many years that I just don't see how dysfunctional they really are?" Betty, who speaks to dozens of parents on the phone every week, laughed and assured me that, on the contrary, she finds them to be appropriately concerned about their children and accurate in their perceptions of their children's giftedness.

So why the bad press? What about the healthy, functional parents who comprise the vast majority of the 1,700 families that have brought their children to our Center? I did find one study that supports our positive view of the parents of gifted children. Mathews, West and Hosie (1986) found that families of the gifted tend to have healthy interaction patterns and a higher level of psychological adjustment than the norm. But too many authors are patronizing and derogatory toward parents. Why?

So far, I've come up with the following possible explanations:

(1) Gifted children generally are not recognized as having special needs; therefore, when a parent approaches an administrator or teacher with requests for acceleration, more challenging work, or placement in a gifted program, she is often perceived as "pushy"—trying to obtain "special privileges" for her child. This has certainly been an accusation of school reformers who staunchly oppose any type of differentiated services.

(2) Although educators receive little, if any, training on meeting the special needs of the gifted, they often assume that they know what is best for *all* of their students. It is difficult to believe that parents might be more informed than they are on the educational needs of gifted children.

(3) Counselors and therapists receive no exposure to the unique concerns of the gifted. Therefore, they are likely to misinterpret both the children and their parents (Silverman,1993).

(4) Since most advocates are mothers rather than fathers, perhaps an underlying cause of the problem is lack of respect for the intelligence of mothers.

I have found parents of gifted children to be as intelligent as their children and to underestimate rather than overestimate their children's need for advancement. They often have to determine how to meet their children's needs with little support or understanding from others. They do not deserve derision. They deserve to be taken seriously and valued for the important role they play in their children's development.

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Linda Silverman, Ph.D. is a licensed psychologist and Director of the Gifted Development Center in Denver, Colorado. Her latest book is *Counseling the Gifted and Talented.*

Kathi Kearney

HE HIGHLY GIFTED

The Age-Grade Lockstep

"I don't want to be a pushy parent. . . "

This apologetic phrase has been the opening salvo of thousands of phone calls I have received over the past 13 years from the parents of extremely gifted children. Almost without exception, the parent was not pushy, but had real concerns about a child whose development was decidedly different. These were ordinary families with extraordinary children, children whose needs often could not or would not be met by the resources typically available to young families in their schools and communities.

Extreme giftedness may well be the most under-researched of all exceptionalities. Without basic research and accompanying public awareness, the myths surrounding an exceptionality continue to proliferate. Thus, what is sometimes perceived by educators and psychologists as "pushiness" is often simply a misunderstanding of the crucial roles parents play in the lives of their highly gifted children. These roles seem to cross both time and culture. Their patterns can be discerned as clearly in the families of exceptionally gifted Australian children (Gross, 1993) and in the poignant letters of mothers of extremely gifted African-American children of the 1940's (Martin D. Jenkins Collection) as in the experience of families of highly gifted American children today. These parents become organizers of their children's education; educators of educators; organizers, managers, and manipulators of co-incidence; and balancers of asynchronous development in the child and in the family *[see Kearney, 1992, in UOG, 4(2)]*.

Organizers of Education

Parents of highly gifted children must organize and orchestrate the education of these children to a degree that is simply not asked of the parents of other children. This includes obtaining accurate information about the child's abilities and about educational options, and arranging, encouraging, and often financing the interventions. Furthermore, our society commonly asks them to do this without public monies, without political support, without upsetting other parents, without making too much extra work for the school, without any legal protection for the child's education, and without seeming "pushy." That is a tall order.

Educators of Educators

Most educators are genuinely concerned about the children they teach. However, few teacher training courses prepare educators to deal with eight-year-olds who are ready for calculus or Shakespeare. In addition, current trends in general education and child development downplay the needs of gifted children. Thus, parents may need to educate the educators not only about the development of this particular child, but about the phenomenon of extreme giftedness itself and about appropriate educational provisions. This must be done with the greatest of tact and kindness.

Managers of Co-incidence

Feldman introduced the concept of co-incidence in the life of a child prodigy:

> *Child and domain must be brought together under circumstances advantageous for sustained engagement. It may also be that certain kinds of prodigies will only appear and develop when a culture is itself organized to recognize and nurture excellence in that particular domain.* (Feldman, 1986, p. 14)

Since prodigies and highly gifted children are still *children*, it is the responsibility of their parents and the larger society to help them harness the forces of co-incidence in their lives. This sometimes means intervening when the culture is *not* "organized to recognize and nurture excellence" (Feldman, 1986, p 14) or worse, is actually hostile to such an effort. Organizing, managing, and manipulating co-incidence is a major task of families of the highly gifted.

> *Consider how difficult it would be for a six-year-old child to break the lockstep of a schooling geared to the ability of the average child; to modify his financial condition; or to plan his own future in such a way as to insure higher education for himself. Such superhuman accomplishments are out of the question, no matter how gifted the child may be. Gifted children are virtually as helpless as any other children, under authorities blind to their exceptionality.* (Hollingworth, 1937, p. 263)

These parental roles are complex in and of themselves. They are complicated tremendously by our society's neglect of highly gifted children. It is time to put aside the myth of the "pushy parent," and to demonstrate respect for the enormous work parents of the most highly gifted children do in getting their children to adulthood reasonably intact emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. The work of that journey is never something to apologize for.

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Kathi Kearney is founder of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in South Casco, Maine, a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Editor of *Highly Gifted Children*.

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY

Creative Ventures And Encounters

Jerry Flack

Tour Guide

Creative Books

From time to time, I enjoy sharing creative learning and teaching materials that may be useful to both classroom teachers and parents. Teachers may find these materials generate excitement in the classroom, and busy parents may desire some birthday, Christmas, and Hanukkah gift ideas.

The most creative teaching materials I have seen recently are two series of John Muir books distributed by the Whole Language publisher, The Wright Group (19201 - 120th Avenue NE, Bothell, WA 98011). The first series is called ***Masters of Motion*** and contains such titles as ***How to Fly a 747, How to Fly the Space Shuttle,*** and ***How to Drive an Indy Race Car.*** The books are extremely colorful, entertaining, and highly informative. A still newer series from the same publisher is ***X-Ray Vision.*** It features five subjects: ***Looking Inside The Brain, Looking Inside Cartoon Animation, Looking Inside Sports Aerodynamics, Looking Inside Sunken Treasure*** and ***Looking Inside Telescopes and the Night Sky.*** There will be very few youngsters alive who won't be stimulated by these two inventive and illuminating book series. These books should appeal to students in grades four and above.

Artistry and magic are found in many new picture books for readers of all ages. Few of these wonderful resources are just for primary-age students. Some of the best art in America today is found in picture books for children. Here are a few recent gems.

Ken Mochizuki's ***Baseball Saved Us*** is a poignant and bittersweet story of family values. Dom Lee's dramatic and beautiful illustrations help to tell Mochizuki's story of how the game of baseball helped one group of Japanese Americans survive the injustice of an internment camp in World War II.

Imagination and history meet in ***Aunt Harriet's Underground Railroad in the Sky,*** Faith Ringgold's tribute to Harriet Tubman. Eight-year-old Cassie Louise Lightfoot and her brother, Bebe, fly high in Ringgold's quilt-like sky that is blue and filled with a sense of wonder.

George Ella Lyon's imaginative use of words and Peter Catalanotto's luminous artwork are creatively employed in ***Dreamplace,*** a time travel book that bridges the centuries to reveal the story of the Anasazi and Mesa Verde. The same duo repeat the early magic they displayed in ***Who Came Down that Road?***

A fantastic storyteller named Agatha only just begins to enjoy her new feather bed from B. B. Lean when six naked geese show up demanding the return of their feathers in Carmen Agra Deedy's delightful book, ***Agatha's Feather Bed: Not Just Another Wild Goose Story.*** This joyous tale is about the origins of things. Laura L. Seeley's sparkling illustrations greatly enhance this wonderful and wacky tale.

Audrey Osofsky's book, **My Buddy,** speaks to the richness of the contributions both people and animals can have in our lives. Ted Rand's illustrations help to reveal the story of a boy with muscular dystrophy and Buddy, his Canine Companion, who makes it possible for him to negotiate his world and participate in it fully. The story demonstrates how the inclusion of all benefits all.

The Moon Lady is an adapted story from Amy Tan's novel ***The Joy Luck Club.*** On a rainy day, a Chinese-

(Continued on page 18)

Mary Lynn Baum

from parent to parent

At a time when educators throughout the U.S. and Canada are expressing deep concern about the lack of parents' involvement with their children's education, parents of gifted children often notice a curious double standard. When they approach teachers and principals about their children's educational needs, they frequently find themselves criticized for being overly concerned about their children or over-involved with them, and insights that should be valued go unheeded.

Consider the following story, related by Carolyn and John Ingalls. *Carolyn, an accountant who is currently a home-maker, and John, a university professor, were very distressed about the situation of their 7-year-old daughter Karen. A bright and vivacious child, whose advanced reading abilities are matched by strong interests in math and science, Karen's initial enthusiasm for school had given way to disappointment.*

"In theory our school system recognizes that each child is an individual who learns at a different rate, and schools are supposed to take account of those differences, but the reality for Karen was quite different. We tried everything we could to convince the teacher of Karen's need for something more. All the things a parent is supposed to do: bringing examples of the things she was doing at home, lists of the books she had read, etc. But we couldn't get anywhere."

The teacher grew concerned when Karen became increasingly tearful in class. Even then, however, her parents' perceptions were discounted. *"The teacher was mainly concerned about Karen's social maturity and thought that giving her more demanding work would place too much pressure on her. We readily acknowledged that socially she was immature, but we couldn't buy the rest of her argument. Quite the opposite. Again and again we tried to convery to the teacher our understanding of our daughter. We tried to impress upon her that Karen needed additional challenge, that she thrived on it, that her tears came not from too many demands being placed upon her but from too few."*

The concerns about Karen's emotional adjustment at least led to her being tested. *"When the psychologist reported back to us, 'You know, you have a very bright little girl here!' it was all we could do to keep our cool. At least the school finally acknowledged what we had been saying all along and acted upon the findings, but it was infuriating that even then we were made to feel that our own perceptions were of little account and the school knew best what our daughter needed."*

The experience of the Ingalls is perhaps at one extreme, but it is unfortunately an experience told repeatedly by parents of gifted children. School systems today pay a lot of lip service to the importance of parents taking an active partnership role, but when parents attempt to offer insights about their children's learning needs, all too often they are considered over-concerned and pushy. As parents, we need to point out, diplomatically, when we receive this mixed message. The perspective we bring to the home/school equation is too important not to be valued.

Mary Lynn Baum is past president of the Gifted Children's Association of British Columbia, Canada, editor since 1983 of its newsletter, *Bright Connections*, and the parent of a highly gifted teenager.

Creative Books (Continued)

American woman entertains her bored grandchildren with a tale drawn from her own childhood experiences in China long ago. Gretchen Schields' bold, colorful, and richly detailed illustrations masterfully complement Ms. Tan's words.

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Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is a President's Teaching Scholar at the University of Colorado, and the author of several books, including ***Inventing, Inventions, and Inventors.***

ANTENNA . . . .

Current Developments in Gifted Education

At the end of each school year I talk with parents of gifted children like Sally, Lauren and Benjamin. We evaluate the past year and confirm plans to contact appropriate school personnel before the new semester begins. We discuss how much smoother this past year would have been if parents had prior opportunities to inform new teachers about unique learning abilities and needs of Sally, Lauren and Benjamin.

❋ *Sally's dad could share her life-long love of animals and her burning desire to become a veterinarian, passions that she was reluctant to talk about in school.*

❋ *The parents of five-year-old Lauren could describe her prolific reading ability and her lack of interest in kindergarten when she realized that none of the other kids could read "long books."*

❋ *Benjamin's mom could tell of the two sides of her son: the boisterous, funny, disruptive class clown, popular with sixth grade classmates but not with teachers; and the intense, quiet computer programmer at home.*

Before school begins each year, I optimistically contact the new teachers of Sally, Lauren and Benjamin and request conferences in which parents can share their accumulation of valuable knowledge. And each year I am informed by the teachers, "We like to find out about students for ourselves. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled in three months, and we should be ready to discuss that information then."

By the time conferences occur, Sally's number of absences has become alarmingly high, Lauren has developed severe stomach cramps requiring regular medication, and Benjamin has received two failing grades in the first quarter.

The theme of "Valuing Parents" and the two lead articles in this issue cause me once again to wonder why it is necessary to *remind* teachers to listen to parents. Parents of gifted children possess years of painstakingly gathered observations, information and gut feelings about their children, and they're willing to share *before* problems develop. Teachers' lack of interest in such valuable resources is counterproductive.

Granted, parent perceptions are subjective. Parents often need advice from professional educators to assist in sorting through all the data. But they have lived and interacted with their children closely for so many years before school was part of their children's lives. Information presented to teachers is not necessarily scientific, but it is well meant; it can be appropriately sorted; and it may, if used properly, just help a child.

Parents, when you finally do arrange that important conference, be prepared. Bring test scores, professional evaluations, anecdotal records and products. Make sure you've read the latest educational theories, particularly in gifted education (Read *Understanding Our Gifted*!), and keep informed on available resources in your district. Be concise and practical!

Teachers, the cost for listening to parents is high in terms of time, and you have little extra to give. However, the rewards are substantial as you utilize parent communication to make more effective use of time in your classrooms.

Dorothy Knopper, M.A., is a private consultant for gifted education in Colorado and the publisher of *Understanding Our Gifted*.

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PING: PARENT INFORMATION NETWORK FOR GIFTED

The Gifted Child Society, a non-profit organization headed by veteran parent advocate Gina Ginsberg Riggs, has developed the only information hotline specifically for parents of gifted children. This live-response 900 number is staffed weekdays 9-4 Eastern Standard Time. Cost: $3 for the first minute and $2 each additional minute. CALL 1-900-773-PING!

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR GIFTED CHILDREN 40TH ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION

November 3-7, 1993. The 40th Annual NAGC Convention will be held at the Westin Peachtree Hotel, Atlanta, Georgia. Division Meetings are scheduled from 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM on Wednesday, November 3rd. Please plan to come early so that you can lend your energy to the Division of your choice (e.g., Global Awareness, Parent & Community, Counseling, Creativity, etc.). Contact NAGC, 1155 15th Street, NW, Suite 1002, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 785-4268.

ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT: A JOURNAL ON ADULT GIFTEDNESS

The first journal on adult giftedness, *Advanced Development* focuses on inner development rather than achievement. Volume 5, "Valuing the Feminine," features the Stone Center's Self-in-Relation Theory. Leta Hollingworth is the moral exemplar. Issues important for both men and women are raised. ($20 for individuals; $30 for institutions.) See the order form on page 14 or contact ISAD, 1452 Marion Street, Denver, CO 80218, (303) 837-8378.

NEXT ISSUE

FOCUS:
EXCELLENCE REVISITED

Making Connections for At-Risk Gifted Children
Mary Kay Finholt, M.S. & Kathy Peckron, M.S.

Full-time Programming: Positive Aspects
Mary Toll, Ed.D.

Of all the men I have known,
I cannot recall one
whose mother did her
level best for him
when he was little
who did not turn out well
when he grew up.

Frances Parkinson Keyes

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November—December, 1993

Volume 6, Issue 2

Making Connections for the At-Risk Gifted Child

Mary Kay Finholt, M. S.
Kathy Peckron, M. S.

Many gifted students are high achievers, but some students' gifts are outweighed by disabilities and emotional problems. Unfortunately, their very high potential does not guarantee superior coping skills, and in some circumstances, giftedness can actually be an aggravating factor. Those who live and work with these bright pennies know that gifted children are not immune to poor self-esteem, social and emotional problems, learning and attention deficits, and underachievement. Gifted children themselves perceive their predicaments all too clearly. When a fifth grade boy with learning and attention deficits was asked about the status of his academics, he replied," I believe we are witnessing the beginning of my decline."

The Dynamics of Underachievement

In her book, *Giftedness, Conflict, and Underachievement*, Whitmore (1980) states that the positive traits of the gifted can be associated with many of the difficulties they face. For example,

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EXCELLENCE REVISITED

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Positive Aspects of Full-Time Programming

Mary F. Toll, Ed.D.

Programming for gifted students, where it exists, usually takes the form of a variety of pull-out or resource models, such as two hours a day, one day a week, or even a few hours a week. A programming model worth examining is the full time model for gifted children. In essence, full time programming can be defined as services provided all day for students. It can be housed at stand alone centers, schools within schools, or magnet schools.

In this era of inclusion for students with disabilities, it is important to remember that gifted students are also exceptional students with abilities that need to be nurtured and developed to their fullest potential. The least restrictive placement for a disabled child may be the regular classroom, whereas this is often the most restrictive environment for a gifted child. Grouping gifted students for instruction is essential in meeting their needs (Rogers, 1991). VanTassel-Baska (1988) stresses the importance of intellectual discussion among peers. School restructuring efforts to date have missed the

(Continued on page 12)

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FROM THE EDITOR

Happy Holidays–

It is quite fitting that we chose the theme "Excellence Revisited" for this issue in light of the fact that the new report just released from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) on November 5th is entitled *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent.* We delayed the publication of *Understanding Our Gifted* so that we could include up-to-date information about this report. (Please see Kathi Kearney's and Dorothy Knopper's columns; See page 19 for information on how to obtain a copy.) It has been over 20 years since the U. S. Government issued a report on the status of gifted children, and it has received a great deal of media attention. But there are proposed changes in the Javits Gifted and Talented Program that could be very harmful to our children. (See my column, page 15.)

Now is an excellent time to run for your local or state School Board, organize a parent advocacy group, join an on-site management team at your child's school, or appeal to your local school board on behalf of gifted children. At the very least, **we urge you to contact members of the Senate and Congress.** Ask that the Javits Act be returned to its original wording and that the National Research Center be kept in the Act. And *tell your stories* about life with gifted children. [Call (303) 837-8378 for FAX and phone numbers of every member of Congress.] Timing is everything, and it looks like the timing is right for advocates of gifted children to be heard.

In this issue, we re-examine excellence from a variety of perspectives. Mary Kay Finholt and Kathy Peckron describe an exemplary support system they have developed for at-risk gifted students in the Rockwood School District in Missouri. Dr. Mary Toll provides a rationale for full time programs for the gifted which have been successful in the state of Florida. And Dr. John Feldhusen has contributed a rejoinder to Rick Ronvik's controversial article on "Re-examining the Foundations of Giftedness" in our July-August issue. We are excited to offer this kind of intellectual dialogue in our journal.

Thank you for all of your letters commending our philosophy and staunch support of giftedness in *Understanding Our Gifted.* We hope that our journal will inspire many courageous attempts on your part to make certain that the needs of gifted children throughout our nation are responded to appropriately.

Linda Silverman

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED

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Deirdre V. Lovecky

IDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

The Written Language Problem

Throughout history, thinking has been synonymous with both reading and writing. An educated person has been one who could put ideas to paper, and indeed, original thought has had little prospect of an audience unless it was first written.

In today's age of visual media, many gifted children consider written communication passe. They are unwilling to invest the amount of time and energy to develop the skills of written expression that gifted children spent in Leta Hollingworth's time (only 50 or so years ago). Her accounts of exceptionally gifted children are replete with discussions of what the children wrote both at home and at school (Hollingworth, 1942). Despite the fact that many of the children had handwriting more like agemates than mental age peers, most did not regard this as a handicap or try to avoid writing.

Today's gifted children appear to regard writing differently. Those children who like to write still spend time developing both handwriting and expressive writing skills. However, fewer children appear to like to write, and those who don't like it refuse to try, rather than learn the skills involved anyway as children did 50 years ago.

There are several reasons for writing refusals in gifted children besides learning disabilities. The first of these is sex-role stereotyping; that is, today's boys tend, much more than boys 50 years ago, to see the things boys do and don't do in rigid stereotypes often dictated by media images. Not only would boys not think of playing with items they deem "girlish," they often refuse to do tasks at which they see girls excelling. They see math and science as "boy's subjects." Reading is sex-role neutral especially if the material refers to either boys' specific interests, such as sports, or the broad area of science, including science fiction. Writing is seen as a girl's subject, especially creative writing and poetry.

Another reason for avoidance of writing involves the lack of development of patience. Today's children are raised in a world of instantaneous communication via media and computer networks. Information is ever present. Many gifted children make the mistake of assuming that the information itself rather than its incorporation into a body of otherwise integrated knowledge is what's important. They prefer to be like computer hard disks storing up information until the disk is full rather than understanding the value of a slow integration of data to form new ideas, to clarify previous misconceptions or to form structures of thought from which one can categorize and prioritize ideas. The mechanism of writing allows these processes to occur. Today's child merely wants the data filed in mind for quick recall but with no attempt at organization.

Finally, children today often seem to lack the imagination that results in the creation of written language. They tend to seek images from media, and use them in predetermined ways. This ties the child to quick-reflex responding to problems rather than to a more reflective, slower processing of possibilities. The child may be information rich but process and structure poor.

Lacking skills in written expression is a problem. Quick reflex-like information processing with minimal reasoning and integration allows one to respond quickly in an emergency but is a weak means for developing long term perspectives. Putting ideas into words allows their transformation from a primitive inner personal reality to a more generalized communication in which one must consider other people.

The ultimate consequence of thinking that written language is for girls, unimportant, and not worth developing, is that gifted children who hold these ideas become uneducated and uneducable. They do not learn the skills needed to develop their gifts and are handicapped in a world where ideas are still the commodity of fruitful exchange.

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Deirdre V. Lovecky, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Providence, Rhode Island, and a frequent author of articles on giftedness in children and adults.

Annemarie Roeper

PARENTING

"Mom, What is Excellence?"

This was the question Lisa asked her mother when she came bursting through the door after school. Her mother saw that she had tears in her eyes.

"What's the matter? What made you ask?" questioned her mother.

Lisa threw her arms around her. *"Martha's paper got a comment saying it was 'Excellent.' I only got a 'Good.'"*

"Did the teacher say anything else when you talked to her?"

"She said I made some spelling mistakes and mistakes in punctuation. Some sentences were not structured that well. But she said the essay was quite nice."

Her mother knew that the essay had meant a great deal to Lisa. She had worked very hard on it and it expressed some thoughts and feelings that had been buried deeply in Lisa's soul. Her mother knew Lisa was hurt by the teacher's lack of understanding and that Lisa needed her support. She, herself, had been moved by Lisa's essay. It was about the secret life in a pond, about the fish and frogs, how they were swimming and playing, how they were born and how they died. She wrote about the algae on top of the pond and the plants hidden beneath it. People walking around the pond knew nothing about the secret teeming life right in front of them.

Lisa's mother consoled her: *"You really loved your story. It was your creation. Your teacher didn't understand it, but when you look at your own story, you will know why. Your teacher didn't see the secret life hidden in your inner 'pond'—your soul. You and I both know it was excellent. It was well written in your own style. You could have written it a little more neatly and carefully. But I want you to know I loved your story and what is more, you loved it."*

Excellence is in the eye of the beholder. Lisa's mother was teaching her an important lesson with several implications. Don't judge yourself by somebody else's standards who does not understand you. Trust yourself. This is an important insight for the gifted as they encounter this situation often. It is hard for gifted people to believe in themselves when they are confronted with the negative judgments of others.

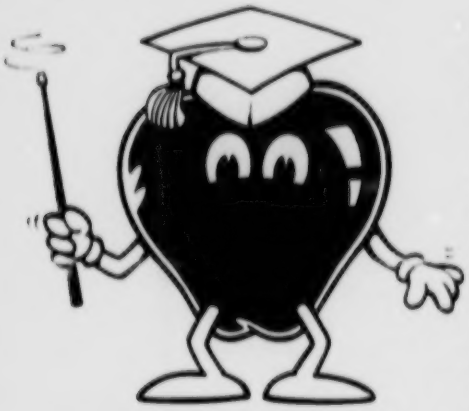
Having her mother's support helped Lisa to build trust in herself. However, she still needed to cope with the reality of the teacher's judgment. Lisa liked her teacher and they had a good rapport. She felt something was now broken between them. When mother and daughter talked about this aspect they decided Lisa would share her reaction with her teacher. Her reason was not that she wanted to set the record straight but because she wanted the teacher to understand her reaction.

When Lisa told her teacher how meaningful the essay was to her, what her thoughts were about it, how hard she had worked on it, her teacher listened attentively and seemed to understand. Lisa said, *"When I wrote this story I wanted to express my thoughts about how often people don't know what goes on around them or how others feel."*

Her teacher said, *"And this is exactly what you feel has happened between you and me, right? I'm glad you felt free to talk to me and I think I really understand it better now."* She put her arm around Lisa. *"You loved writing the story, and it disappointed you that I didn't seem to love reading it. It feels excellent to you."* When the teacher reread the story she suddenly realized what a lovely, sensitive story it was. *"Why don't you rewrite it, because you do know there are some mistakes in it, and then turn it in again and maybe you'll be surprised by the new comments."* Lisa felt proud and greatly relieved for having dealt with the situation honestly.

Realistically, we know that such a resolution may only happen in a small number of cases. For this reason it is most important for parents to help their children to trust themselves in the face of lack of empathy from others.

Dr. Annemarie Roeper is a consultant on the gifted in Oakland, California, and author of the book, ***Educating Children for Life.*** Co-founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the ***Roeper Review***, Annemarie has inspired a worldwide focus on global awareness in gifted education.



INSTRUCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

In my mind, the burning question is whether excellence in public education can be *re*visited; has our public educational system *ever* achieved overall excellence? Or, have spots of excellence always existed, but never been generalized or generalizable? Having asked this question, I choose to leave its answer to others, who are more knowledgeable in such matters than I. To me, the more pertinent question is, what *is* achievable excellence for public schools, and what would this excellence mean for the gifted child?

In this article, I will focus on examining some elements of public school excellence and what its achievement would mean in a general way for gifted students. I will consider excellence in teaching, student achievement, and curriculum, fully realizing that many elements and factors are being ignored.

One of the critical elements of excellent education is, or course, teachers. If we are to have educational excellence, teachers must value academic excellence for themselves and their students. They must conduct themselves as eager learners alongside their students. Teachers must care about their students as people and as lifelong learners and problem solvers. Part of this caring is caring enough to push their students toward excellence.

Student achievement is a benchmark of excellence. Parent, student, and teacher expectations all affect achievement. The issue becomes what level of achievement we should expect of a given student. I suggest we borrow from athletics and sports in this regard. P.E. teachers are fully aware of varying abilities and aptitudes, but they expect every able-bodied child to master certain skills and the operational basics of a variety of team and individual sports. Transferring this to academics, all students should be expected to master basic communication and problem-solving skills and to build on these according to their varying abilities and aptitudes. The minimum competency level should *never, never* become the general expectation.

Excellent curriculum is open-ended, flexible, and relevant to the learner. Its applicability to life is apparent because it is presented, practiced, and learned within real-life contexts. Additionally, it is challenging *at least some of the time* to every student.

When gifted students have a teacher who values academic excellence and models learning as an exciting endeavor, they feel as if they have found a soul-mate. They will forgive other shortcomings and work devotedly for such a teacher. In response to this and expectations of excellence, they can achieve at appropriate levels, especially within the structure of open-ended, relevant curriculum.

Being an optimist as well as an idealist, I believe the elements of excellence I have mentioned are achievable in public education. If educational excellence were to be valued by our society as a whole, change would follow. Further, I believe this achievable excellence would especially benefit gifted learners, because they are the population with the biggest excellence gap—that gap between expectations or curriculum and the achievable.

Shirley W. Schiever, Ph.D., is a curriculum specialist at the Fine Arts Magnet School in Tucson, Arizona, and the author of *A Comprehensive Approach to Teaching Thinking*.

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Stephanie S. Tolan

HE READING ROOM

In this visit to the Reading Room the topic is the unusual powers of the human mind, and the single book is British author Peter Dickinson's *The Healer*. In an earlier visit we discusssed Dickinson's eerie and challenging book, *Eva*. This is an author who takes chances, who writes intellectually complex novels with fine and compelling stories.

The protagonist of *The Healer*, which is set in contemporary England, is 16-year-old Barry Evans, an extremely bright working class high school dropout. The story is told through his viewpoint and he creates the considerable action. However, the real center of both the book's plot and its thematic mystery is Pinkie Proudfoot, the strange, quiet, plain-looking ten-year-old girl Barry befriended more than two years before. Not quite eight then, she had understood on first seeing him in the school corridor that he was having a "bad head." She had immediately taken his hands and—*had she really?*—made one of his terrible, intractable migraines go away.

Perplexed and grateful, aware that she was new in town and vulnerable, Barry began watching over her and interceding for her on the school bus, on the playground, and eventually with her aloof and solitary mother. On occasion he took her by bus to see her eccentric, wheelchair-bound grandfather in another town.

As their strange friendship grew, Barry had tried (and failed) to explain to himself Pinkie's apparent "powers." Though she was frequently clumsy, confused by the demands of ordinary life, uncertain about such things as math, she appeared to have access to other realms of mind, and often knew things about him he had told no one, sometimes things he had barely allowed himself to know. And he had felt the warmth that moved through him at her touch as she took his pain away. And there was Pinkie's grandfather's insistence that she had taken away the "phantom pain" from his amputated leg.

Now, two years after he last saw her at her eighth birthday party, at which her mother forbade him to see her again because he had mentioned her healing powers, he has (with her grandfather's help) tracked her down. Pinkie is now the centerpiece and main attraction at a "research" organization known as The Foundation where crowds of people pay 400 pounds each for a healing "experiment." Dr. John Freeman, a charismatic blond Moses-look-alike, heads The Foundation, oversees the experiments, and writes scientific papers about the Harmonic Energies that Pinkie is able to channel for healing.

By now Barry has convinced himself that there are ordinary, rational explanations for Pinkie's apparent abilities. The Foundation, its cures and its claims, he believes, are frauds. Freeman, now Pinkie's stepfather, is exploiting her and bilking the public. Pinkie adds to his conviction by secretly letting him know she wants to get away.

The plot, though many-layered and complex, is tight, tense and suspenseful. Barry takes a menial job at The Foundation where he sets out to prove to himself that everyone there is a charlatan. Surely the apparent calm, cheer and goodwill that pervade the institution are faked or imaginary. After he discovers Freeman is drugging Pinkie to try to enhance her success, he determines to rescue her over apparently insurmountable obstacles.

Is Pinkie a healer? Are her powers real? Are there unseen energies converging at an ancient circle of standing stones? Is Freeman a fraud or a genius or both? Dickinson, true to form, offers no easy answers, for characters or for readers. There are no clear good-evil dichotomies here to keep one safe. The book leaves its readers pondering a realm of energies that are, if they exist, like gravity and electromagnetism—invisible and thus far inexplicable. A source of endless, fascinating discussion—give it to a group of bright kids and stand back!

Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.

KALEIDOSCOPE

Revisiting a Place We've Never Been

It's hard to return to a place we've never been, but as our field of gifted child education matures, that is exactly what we must do. For more than 20 years, our school programs and services for gifted children have focused on *intellectual* development—not surprising, considering that high abilities were what brought gifted children to our attention in the first place! However, theorists and practitioners alike have come to interpret intellectual development in very narrow ways, so that our school programs are focused in only three areas: content, content, and content. In the rush to take advantage of the academic talents of children, we have chosen to bypass the very characteristics that often distinguish them from their classmates—maturity of insight, heightened sensitivity, and emotional dissonance.

Blame this on the accountability movement, or on our national rush to prove that our standardized test scores can beat any of our global neighbors' kids. But whatever the source, one thing is certain: our most capable students are too often seen as automatons, able to generate or regurgitate knowledge that would do them well if their career goal was to be a master at *Jeopardy*! I don't mean to downplay the ability of a 12 year old who scores 800 on the SAT math test, nor do I mean to diminish the aptitude of a junior Bobby Fisher. But isn't there something more, something deeper, to this idea called "giftedness"? I think there is.

As our field looks toward new directions, I hear the term "talent development" being used more frequently. If this implies *emotional*, *aesthetic* and *empathic* development, then I'm all for it. However, if it implies (as I think it does) that we're just seeking a term more palatable to the public than "gifted," then I'm afraid we will continue to promote the same practices that have been around for years. Same outfit, new label.

Parents and other educators must be on their guards to ensure that the rush to develop talent goes beyond the obvious. If once again we focus all or most of our attention on academic gifts, or the societal benefits to enhancing the education of gifted children, then we will surely be making the same mistakes as in previous generations. Our most able children need to know how to love as well as how to reason, for these talents are most certainly the ones that are most lacking in our increasingly technological world.

> *After you understand about the stars and the sun and the rotation of the Earth, you may still miss the radiance of a sunset or the brilliance of a rainbow.*
>
> **Alfred North Whitehead**

So, next time you are at school, participating in a parent conference concerning your child's progress, ask the teachers about the importance they place in developing *emotional* talents. It's a place in the curriculum we haven't visited often enough, but it's a place we need to revisit again.

Jim Delisle, Ph.D., teaches at Kent State University and is the author of five books, including ***Guiding the Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Youth*** (Longman, 1992).

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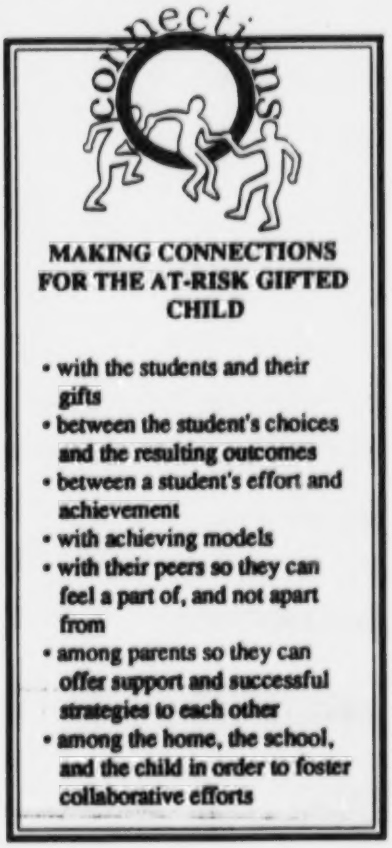
perfectionism, a trait common to giftedness, can lead to feelings of always falling short of expectations, whether these expectations are self-imposed or imposed by others. The ability to think critically can cause the child to be openly critical of others. Some gifted individuals are years ahead intellectually, and yet struggle to fit in socially. Their high energy level, self-directive nature, wide range of interests, and need for tasks that require abstract thinking, rather than drill, place these children in conflict with the curriculum, the teacher, and their peers. Even when school tasks require higher level thinking, some gifted students remain unmotivated. Underachievers have a tendency to become engaged in assignments only if they are of special interest to them.

Some profoundly gifted students are so distracted by their own thoughts that they rarely tune into class lecture and discussion, and often do not know what has been assigned. An exceptionally bright student explained his tendency to "tune out" during class: *"Sometimes I believe that my mind is like an enormous room with many doors. These doors represent all the things I need to think about."*

The presence of learning disabilities may eclipse the strengths of a gifted child. Learning disabilities or processing deficits camouflage the gifts, and the gifts mask the learning difficulties (Silverman, 1989). Average or low achievement scores, average or low grades, and uneven performance on intelligence tests, resulting from these disabilities, may preclude these students from qualifying for gifted programs. Even if insightful teachers and parents recognize that there is gold to be mined in this student, they may also believe that if the student cannot achieve in the regular classroom, placement in a gifted program would be inviting more problems. With the best of intentions, much time and attention is devoted to the problem behaviors, and the gifts remain unrecognized or unaddressed. A parent commented that, before her daughter's placement in the Connections Program, her child *"...was on a collision path with failure. I could see a future of unhappiness and complete burnout with life for her, and there wasn't much I could do with the system labeling her a 'problem.'"*


connections
MAKING CONNECTIONS FOR THE AT-RISK GIFTED CHILD
• with the students and their gifts
• between the student's choices and the resulting outcomes
• between a student's effort and achievement
• with achieving models
• with their peers so they can feel a part of, and not apart from
• among parents so they can offer support and successful strategies to each other
• among the home, the school, and the child in order to foster collaborative efforts

The Connections Program

The Rockwood School System's Connections Program for At-Risk Gifted Students uses a comprehensive approach because we believe the negative mechanisms of underachievement are interrelated. Therefore, the Connections Program implements the following strategies:

- *Identification of the "hidden gifted"*
- *Attention to the gift through Talented and Gifted (TAG) Program participation, mentoring, and use of community resources which would utilize the student's strengths*
- *Advocacy and support for the student at the child's school*
- *Parent support and involvement*
- *Programs for improving social skills*
- *Techniques for teaching decision-making and goal-setting.*

Identification

1. It was our intention to improve the ability of teachers and counselors to recognize giftedness in students who were not achieving. The Connections teacher held workshops with the staffs of selected elementary schools to explain the characteristics of the targeted student, the purpose and structure of the Connections Program, and the use of the Identification Checklist [adapted from Whitmore's (1980) "A Checklist to Identify Gifted Underachievers" (p. 237)]. A booklet comprised of related information was distributed to counselors and staff.

2. As nominations were received, a *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Third Edition* (WISC-III) was administered to each nominated student by the TAG psychometrist, unless a valid IQ score was available.

3. The Connections teacher conducted structured interviews with teachers and parents of nominated students, using questions adapted from Whitmore's (1980) checklist and Baum, Dixon & Owen's Structured Interview Form (1991, p.65). The questions focus on the child's outside interests as much as on school performance. Often, the same child who avoids schoolwork with a maddening passivity may be pursuing avid interests at home,

although sometimes in very narrowly focused ways. We hear repeatedly from parents and teachers that these students tend to exhibit gifted behaviors more frequently when they are very interested in an activity. This information weighed heavily in the selection process.

4. The interviews indicated whether the student was exhibiting one or more of the following behaviors: poor self-esteem, poor social skills, distractibility or inattentiveness, resistance to efforts to motivate or discipline, disorganization, failure to complete assignments, or a vast gap between the quality of oral vs. written work.

5. With the guidance of the psychometrist, subtest scores of the WISC-III were examined by the Connections teacher and TAG counselor. As recommended by Silverman (1989) and Baum, Dixon, and Owen (1991), we found it useful to look beyond the Full Scale IQ score to detect indications of giftedness. Subtest scores in the 16-19 range are considered to be in the gifted range, but these can be overshadowed by low scores which cancel their effect in the Full Scale IQ score. [For a more complete analysis of WISC scores, see Baum, Dixon and Owen (1991) and Silverman (1989).]

Our experience has borne out the validity of using subtest scores to identify giftedness. Students with some subtest scores in the gifted range, and Full Scale IQ scores in the superior range, have been succeeding in the TAG program, with appropriate accommodations. Based upon his Performance IQ score, which was in the gifted range, a fourth grade boy who had been diagnosed as having attention deficit disorder and learning disabilities was placed at the TAG center for afternoons. The reports on this child's progress at the TAG center have been enthusiastic. *"He is so bright! He has so much knowledge about science and he uses it creatively!"* Although he has social difficulties to be addressed, his parents report an improvement in his self-esteem. Before TAG placement, the child's regular teacher had said during the teacher interview, *"I have never seen him smile."*

6. The Connections teacher interviewed the students to assess their interests, approach to tasks, and social and emotional characteristics. All at-risk gifted students were served.

Program Components

Attention to Strengths

Attention to the gift is critical for this population. Experience with gifted underachievers and gifted learning disabled students has shown that, when given the time, resources and support to develop their interests and gifts, at-risk gifted students often begin to show improved achievement and adjustment (Baum, Dixon, & Owen, 1991; Emerick, 1989).

The Rockwood School District TAG Program offers a resource component in the child's school and a once-per-week attendance at the district's Center for Creative Learning (CCL). This dual program and the structure of the day itself at the district's CCL have made it possible to gradually integrate these students into the TAG program as we learn more about their strengths and needs. Afternoon "Kaleidoscope" classes provide a comfortable inaugural experience with a gifted program for the at-risk gifted student. These classes are hands-on, high interest, exploratory mini-classes which change every nine weeks. They are intellectually rigorous and foster creativity, but are not particularly oriented toward traditional academic skills and format. There are as many as 12-15 classes from which to choose, allowing the Connections teacher, parents, and Connections student to select a topic in the student's areas of strength and interest.

Since the majority of the at-risk students experience difficulty with written expression, the TAG teachers encourage the use of tape recorders, dictation, and final products which do not require a lot of writing. Students with reading problems were able to take books home to receive assistance from parents. Because of the small classes, students who require emotional support were able to solve problems with their teacher or the TAG counselor as difficulties arose.

In addition to the appropriateness of the curriculum of the CCL, much of the success of these students was due to the flexibility and skillful handling of the Connections student by the CCL teachers. Several students eventually began to attend a full day at the CCL and, with accommodations to their special needs, are adjusting well to the demands of full-day participation.

Our experience has borne out the validity of using subtest scores to identify giftedness.

Mentoring

A mentoring program is underway with several students. The Connections teacher is supervising each mentorship, providing support and guidance to the process to insure maximum success. The mentors are community businesspersons who devote at least two hours a week with their mentee on special projects of interest to the student. This format has excellent potential for improving self-

esteem by fostering a positive relationship with an achieving model, helping the student make a connection between school and real-world skills, and developing the student's talents.

Under the direction of his mentor, a sixth grade student with an interest in carpentry and science has built a hovercraft. He will have an opportunity to offer a ride on the vehicle to students at his school. With the guidance of an electrical engineer, another student has designed and built a printed circuit board, resulting in an audio-oscillator which produces an equally tempered musical scale. Both students have attracted a lot of positive comments from other students and teachers as the projects were being built, and both boys will make a presentation to their science classes.

Student Support

The Connections teacher met individually with the students for at least once a week. The following strategies were implemented according to each student's needs:

1. The Connections teacher provided opportunities for some of the students to do hands-on science activities and to pursue topics related to their interests. Through these experiences, the Connections teacher became familiar with each student's strengths, needs, and learning style so that a well-informed decision could be made regarding the likelihood of success for the student at the CCL.

2. The Connections teacher became familiar with the resources within each student's school which had potential for developing the student's strengths. Some examples are arranging for a student who is an avid reader to read to a first grade class on a regular basis; pointing out ways in which a student's abilities with computers could foster leadership in the classroom; involving the student in the science fair; and suggesting ways in which art abilities could be utilized.

3. Using a format derived from Heacox (1991), the Connections teacher taught goal-setting procedures to selected students. The model requires the student to be in charge of the process and to plan, in advance, strategies designed to overcome possible obstacles. Incentives were also discussed with an emphasis on non-material rewards, such as having more control over their own schedules, spending time with a parent, or earning a special privilege.

4. Since many gifted at-risk students have poor time-management and organizational skills, the students, with the assistance of the Connections teacher, designed their own system for assignment management. This technique is usually most effective with sixth graders and above, particularly if the students request this help, are actively engaged in the process of creating the system and the incentives, and are allowed to make changes as the need occurs.

5. This weekly meeting also provided a positive relationship with an unconditionally accepting adult. In some cases, this relationship seemed to be an important part of the student's motivation to improve. Many of these students experience negative feedback from peers, some teachers, and sometimes parents. Wittingly or unwittingly, the child is often inviting negative reactions: a negative cycle is then established. The meeting with the Connections teacher provided a time when the student could experience positive interaction in the context of working toward changing self-defeating behaviors.

6. The Connections teacher acted as an advocate for the student with the classroom teacher, as well. The teacher received information related to the student's personality, strengths and needs, and support for his or her efforts to meet the student's needs. It is important to note that teacher selection is critical. The most effective teacher for underachievers is one who recognizes small successes and improvements, maintains appropriate expectations, and does not take the lack of interest or effort personally. This is a difficult balancing act.

7. Regular teachers, through a weekly communication form, related student progress to the Connections teacher. This information could be shared with the student, used to measure progress toward goals, and shared with parents.

8. For several middle school students, a once-per-month meeting that included parents, teachers and the student was conducted. (See Scammahorn, Scammahorn, & Woythal, 1990.) The intention of this component is to encourage the students to become part of the change process. Ideally, students will, through practice, increase their comfort levels in advocating for themselves, learn to set goals, and hear from teachers regarding their progress toward those goals. The students are encouraged to write the agenda for the meeting, make copies for all in attendance, decide whom to invite (minimum of one parent and one teacher), and lead the meeting. The Connections teacher needs to caution the regular teachers in advance that emphasis should be on positives, recognizing

small successes, and allowing the students to be equal partners in these business meetings.

9. The Connections teacher's close and cooperative working relationship with many of the students' special education teachers made a significant contribution to the students' successes. The combination of knowing the gifts and the deficit areas added to the comprehensiveness of the program.

Parent Involvement

The Connections teacher or other school counselors facilitated several parent group meetings throughout the school year. Some parents shared the relief they felt when they realized other families were experiencing similar difficulties. This normalized their experiences, allowed them to see the competencies they possess as parents, and enabled them to share successful strategies.

Beginning this year, the parents of middle school students will meet for eight sessions with a counselor who is experienced in working with adolescents and their families. We feel the consistency of working with the same counselor over a period of time may assist parents with the added challenges of adolescence.

Also, on a limited basis, the TAG counselor and the Connections teacher met individually with parents to assist with strategies for dealing with the child's behavior in the family. Commenting on her own improvements months later, one girl said, *"It's kind of like a biography! At the end of some biographies, the main characters get their act together when they are 60 years old. I managed to do that at age 10!"*

The TAG counselor also conferred with the Connections teacher on a regular basis on issues that arose with the Connections students. This professional support and guidance was essential because so many of the at-risk students' issues are counseling related.

The Connections teacher's frequent phone calls to parents kept them apprised of the student's progress. These calls also provided encouragement to parents when their child's progress was disappointing. This program attempts to provide a safety net for the student and for the parents given the challenges they face with their child. Parents were encouraged to provide positive reinforcement for germinal successes.

Peer and Social Skills Groups

Because social interaction difficulties are common to this population, we are adding a regular peer-group meeting for the elementary students. The meetings, which will be conducted by the TAG counselor, will provide an opportunity for students to gain insight into their own social behaviors and to learn and practice social skills.

First, the TAG counselor will conduct the peer-group social skills training. Then the students will join in a recreational or creative activity, like decorating t-shirts or playing mini-putt golf. We have paired seniors from the local high school community service class with each student to provide a good role model for social skills and to assist in the activities. The TAG counselor can use the behaviors demonstrated at these get-togethers in the context of the social-skills group meetings. This may facilitate transfer of the skills learned in a group to an actual social situation. We plan to conduct these meetings twice a month for four months. During alternate student meetings, the parents will meet to discuss issues they have identified as important to the parenting of their gifted child.

Conclusion

A program for at-risk gifted children needs to provide attention to the child's gifts and interests, be structured so that the student is directed towards controlling his or her own progress and decisions, involve and support the parents, and provide an advocate for the student who will oversee the change process and provide unconditional positive regard.

The Connections Program attempts to help at-risk gifted children make meaningful social and emotional connections with others and with that which is finest within themselves. It was to facilitate these "connections" that our program was developed.

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Note: With special gratitude to Joyce Scammahorn and Debbie Woythal for their generosity in sharing ideas from their Challenge Program for gifted underachievers in Shawnee Mission School District, Shawnee Mission, Kansas.

opportunity to raise ceiling levels for gifted students as well as provide challenging environments for them.

An optimal learning environment for gifted children addresses their academic, emotional, and social needs. Full time programming models not only honor the holistic experiences of these special students but also provide the following benefits:

♦ ***The development of a curriculum framework for meeting the academic needs of gifted students in all content areas.*** The opportunity to integrate subject matter and the flexibility of time to explore concepts in depth on a daily basis enable true differentiation of curriculum strategies for this population. Gifted students have the opportunity to experience a cohesive approach to content and skill development. Gaps in learning rarely occur, as these children are not missing blocks of instructional time—a drawback of pull-out models.

♦ ***Elimination of disjointed times for gifted instruction.*** Gifted children do not turn on their giftedness from 1:00 to 3:00 on Thursdays or only on Wednesday mornings. Giftedness is a 24-hour-a-day phenomenon. Less disruption in the gifted child's instructional day is an additional factor to consider in a full time model.

♦ ***Support and understanding for the emotional and social dimensions of the gifted.*** Working with peers on an extended, daily basis is a tremendous plus for these students. Discussing sophisticated mathematical concepts and not feeling weird or strange about that discussion does wonders for developing positive self-concepts (Delisle, 1992). Teachers of the gifted can offer discussions of the unique sets of problems that face the gifted (Colangelo & Peterson, 1993). Realizing that other students with similar abilities and interests feel different from their peers, have problems, or need assistance in developing strategies for coping with situations, provides a solid foundation for the prevention of possible future social and emotional problems.

♦ ***In addition, full time programming is more cost effective than pull-out programs, since it does not require additional staff.***

Combatting Misconceptions

Support for comprehensive services for the gifted can be gained when misconceptions about full time programming have been eliminated. Some of these misconceptions include:

♦ In full time programs, gifted students will not learn to get along with all types of students.

♦ Gifted students will become "elitists" if they are grouped together.

♦ Gifted students may not need full time programs as they usually are not gifted in all areas.

The above misconceptions can be addressed in the following ways:

First, students who are identified as gifted come from all economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. When they are placed with their intellectual peers, they still learn how to relate to all types of individuals. Most full day programs are housed in heterogenous schools, where gifted students can interact with students in other classes during recess, lunch, art, music, physical education and other activities.

Second, the accusation of elitism is unfounded. Gifted children are *less* likely to develop elitist attitudes when they find other children brighter than themselves than when they are the smartest in the class (Silverman, 1993).

Third, gifted children, like other children, have areas of strength and weaknesses. These discrepancies can be addressed in the self-contained class by differentiated instruction. In addition, full time programming can have a pull-out option built into the model that would permit students, as needed, to attend other content area classes based on their areas of need.

One Model

Some school districts in the state of Florida decided to develop full time programming for gifted students based on the preceding benefits. In Palm Beach County School District, a district-based study related to the needs of gifted students was undertaken first. Committees were established in order to study the feasibility of different program models and to make recommendations on essential issues, such as early identification, curriculum, instructional strategies and policies about acceleration. After exploring a number of alternatives, self-contained classes were recommended as the most beneficial model to implement. Full time programming was considered the least restrictive environment for the gifted. It was decided that this K-5 district would phase in the plan over a three- to four-year period.

Full time programming was considered the least restrictive environment for the gifted.

Center schools, schools within regular elementary schools, were selected as the mode for implementation of the model. Approximately one-third of the total school population in these kindergarten through fifth grade schools was composed of gifted students. Feeder elementary schools

were identified to send their gifted students to the full time center schools.

Instruction was focused on differentiated curricula in all content areas. Specific guidance and counseling sessions were also incorporated into the program. Activity periods, through areas of interest, were developed so that the entire school population would have an opportunity to get acquainted with each other.

Part time resource pull-out programs were to be eliminated as the phase-in occurred. The end result was approximately 13 elementary gifted centers with approximately 200 gifted students at each center.

Initial reaction to the full time center plan was mixed. Pro and con forces rallied. Concerns, as expected, centered around transportation, "elitism," and a possible "brain drain" on the feeder schools. The district conducted a series of information sessions outlining the transportation plan, issues related to curriculum, and rationale for the full time programming model. Support for the program grew and the school board decided to implement the model on a one-year pilot basis with one full time gifted center. Data were to be collected from the pilot center before a decision on full implementation would occur.

Research from the pilot year of the program found gifted students to be in favor of the program, parents in support, and teachers enjoying the instructional experience. The teachers found that these students came to them with instructional gaps. They felt that full time programming assisted in eliminating these gaps. Students commented on less disruption; they could stay with one teacher all day and receive the instruction they needed. They were also supportive of the guidance and counseling component, believing it helped them understand their giftedness and deal more effectively with their areas of stress. Standardized scores on the SAT, as well as scores on the Developing Cognitive Abilities Test (DCAT), continued to show high levels of achievement for the students. Parents who initially had concerns about the program were pleased with the full time approach. Early identification of gifted students was enhanced by the inclusion of kindergarten and first grade classes.

As of August 1992, 13 elementary full-time centers have been established serving over 2,000 elementary gifted students. Teacher training in issues of giftedness, curriculum strategies, and guidance and counseling needs of the gifted, as well as district awareness of the program, have contributed to the success of the expanded operation of the full time gifted program. Students, parents, and teachers believe this program is a step toward addressing the 24-hour-a-day phenomenon of giftedness.

Conclusion

Receiving an education which is appropriate and commensurate with one's abilities should be the goal of all education. Gifted children are almost always ahead of regular classroom instruction. For these students not to be able to learn new concepts is a lack of appropriate planning for the gifted as well as a waste of their school time. Unchallenging educational experiences for the gifted can also lead to behavior problems and underachievement.

It is important to remember that gifted children cannot always make it on their own. They require programming commensurate with their abilities, they need to be challenged, they need to understand their giftedness, and they need to be understood by others. Full time programming is an approach to meeting these needs.

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Open Space Communications presents the ***Professional Development Series . . . Current Themes in Gifted Education.*** Dr. Elinor Katz, Dean of Education at the University of Denver, is Editor of the series and author of ***Affective Education: Self Concept & the Gifted Student.*** Dorothy Knopper, Publisher of ***Understanding Our Gifted,*** is the author of ***Parent Education: Parents as Partners.*** The first two books will be available in January, 1994. For special pre-publication rates use the order form in this issue or contact:

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Foundations of Talent: A Rejoinder to R. W. Ronvik

John F. Feldhusen, Ph.D.

While we applaud many of the common sense insights presented by R. W. Ronvik in "Reexamining the Foundations of Giftedness,"[UOG, 5(6)] recognize the excellence of services for gifted youth in Chicago schools, and agree with his assertion of the basic role of acceleration in teaching the gifted, we nevertheless disagree with several of the criticisms and assertions made in the article and in the six guidelines offered at the end related to talent, acceleration, and enrichment.

We turn first to his discussion of the talent concept which he sees as simply a matter of terminology. He says "The problem is no one seems to know what it means, or perhaps more accurately everyone thinks it means something else" (p.8). Given over a decade of talent searches throughout the United States and the hundreds of educational programs that grew out of them, it is almost incredible to say no one knows what "talent" means. The leaders of talent searches have defined clearly and operationally the abilities they assess.

It should also be noted that the distinguished University of Chicago scholars, Benjamin Bloom and Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, have published major scholarly works reporting on "talent" and its development: *Developing Talent in Young People* (Bloom, 1985) and *Talented Teenagers, the Roots of Success and Failure* (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). Both of these scholars seem to understand that talent denotes specific aptitudes or abilities that can be developed in young people.

Furthermore, the term *talent* seems to have more meaning than "gifted" and "gifted education" which have diverse meanings. In school practice an incredible variety of tests are used and misused as well as widely varying cutting levels in the identification of "gifted" youth. Furthermore, "gifted education" ranges from weekly pullout sessions of as little as 30 minutes to full-time educational programs, and all with widely varying curricula.

A further problem is the statistical naivete of selecting and labeling children as gifted or not gifted using what Ronvik calls "credible" measures (p.10). What are those "credible" measures? Does he mean intelligence tests? Or achievement tests? Both are quite good predictors of long range achievement but also quite fallible. We will label "gifted" some who will never achieve at a high level, and we will classify some who have high potential as "ungifted." Why can't students be selected for programs on the basis of specific needs (precocity or advanced talent) and given accelerated instruction without being categorized and labelled as "gifted"?

The term "talent" denotes a specific focus on the special aptitude or ability of a student. Ronvik argues in his third guideline that educational services should be directed to the "areas in which a student has been identified as gifted" (p.10). Does Ronvik really propose that "area" is a better term than talent?

The concept of enrichment advocated by Ronvik as depth and intensity focused on subject matter is ambiguous. Depth and intensity may be akin to conceptual abstractness and complexity, but these characteristics can be subsumed under the acceleration umbrella. They characterize the higher age or grade level to which precocious children should be advanced to meet their needs in their specific talent areas, as Ronvik suggests in his third guideline or principle (p. 10). Thus, the concept of enrichment may be unnecessary. Acceleration subsumes all!

Inconsistencies in the definition and application of enrichment and acceleration are characteristic of the general confusion in our field about these concepts. Categorizing educational interventions as one or the other is not realistic. **All curriculum and instruction for talented youth must be presented at levels, pace, abstractness, and complexity appropriate to their levels of intellectual precocity.** Ultimately there is no acceleration, just matching youth with curriculum and instruction that affords an appropriate challenge, given their levels of prior achievement.

In summary, we agree with Ronvik's enthusiasm for acceleration and his assertion that "Gifted program classes should take on the same subject matter as the school's regular program" (p. 10) but conclude that he is wrong in accepting enrichment as a service for the gifted along with acceleration and dismissing the concept of talent. Renzulli and Reis (1991) stated the case well recently when they said "Talent development is the business of our field..." (p. 28). The time is at hand to focus educational program services on the specific talents of youth and above all to ensure that the services are appropriately tailored to their needs.

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Personality Plus

Asynchrony

The concept of giftedness originated in the field of psychology, specifically as a part of the study of individual differences. Over the years, it lost its psychological focus and became imbedded in the field of education. It was adopted by Curriculum and Instruction, and the search began for an elusive differentiated curriculum for the gifted. As Ronvik (1993) has shown in his article "Re-examining the Foundations of Giftedness," [*UOG, 5*(6)] the longed-for curricular answer was never found. While wonderful new teaching strategies and content were experimented with in resource rooms, the question was perennially raised, "Why isn't this good for all children?" As there was no satisfactory answer to the question, gifted education came to be the research and development arm for regular education.

In recent years there has been a great outcry against any type of special provisions for the gifted, and many, many administrators in public, private and parochial schools across the nation can be heard saying, "I don't believe in giftedness." From the viewpoint of psychology or special education, this makes about as much sense as saying, "I don't believe in retardation" or "I don't believe in individual differences."

The extent to which we have lost sight of the gifted as a population with special needs is clearly demonstrated in the proposed changes to the Jacob Javits Gifted & Talented Program: "*By the end of the third year of a grant, each project would have to expand gifted and talented programs to serve all students in a school.*" (*Congressional Briefing Book*, part of the ESEA Reauthorization to be voted on by Congress.) Would this make any sense at all if we were talking about children with severe developmental delays instead of developmental advancement?

What went wrong? How can educators not believe in what parents live with every day? I feel we went astray by severing the relationship between giftedness and psychology. Psychologists are no longer involved in the identification of the gifted. In 1972, Public Law 91-230 stated that "gifted and talented children are those identified by professionally qualified persons...." In 1978, "professionally qualified persons" was removed, and in the 1993 OERI report, *National Excellence*, the use of test data has been questioned. The report even states that preschool and primary children "should not" be identified as gifted (p. 28). The educational needs of the gifted stem directly from their psychological needs, and these needs are apparent in early childhood.

Two years ago, we introduced a psychological definition of giftedness in the January issue of *Understanding Our Gifted* in Martha Morelock's (1992) article: "Giftedness: The View from Within." The following definition has become central to the philosophy of our journal:

> ***Giftedness is asynchronous development** in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. The uniqueness of the gifted renders them particularly vulnerable and requires modifications in parenting, teaching and counseling in order for them to develop optimally.* (The Columbus Group, 1991)

This means that gifted children develop in an *uneven* manner, that they are more complex and intense than their agemates, that they feel out-of-sync with age peers and "age appropriate curriculum," that the internal and external discrepancies increase with IQ, and that these differences make them extremely vulnerable. Their greatest need is *each other* in an environment in which it is safe to be different. IQ tests may not predict who will become famous, but they do give at least a minimal estimate of the degree of the child's asynchrony, and, therefore, vulnerability.

Lately, the term "asynchrony" has taken on another meaning, in Howard Gardner's new book, *Creating Minds*. Gardner (1993) uses it to describe tensions generated by an imperfect fit between the accomplished adult and his domain or the field judging the quality of the individual's work, or in the individual's development in different domains. He hypothesizes that too little or too much asynchrony will not be fruitful to creativity. Gardner's use of the term once again removes it from the psychology of inner experience, and we are left looking only at the externals of achievement.

The new OERI definition suffers from the same emphasis on "performance," "achievement," and "accomplishment." When will we begin to recognize that giftedness is a *psychological reality* that must be responded to lest we destroy these children?

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Kathi Kearney

THE HIGHLY GIFTED

Discrimination against Excellence

The U. S. Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) recently issued the first national report on the education of gifted children since 1972. The report is wide-ranging, with a focus on anti-intellectualism in American society, the needs of underserved gifted children, and a status report on gifted education in the 1990s.

Less than a week after the report was released, *The New York Times* interviewed the young mother of Jonathan Estrada, a highly gifted bilingual four-year-old boy above 160 IQ. He is reading at the fifth-grade level, and is a geography whiz. The local public school recently made drastic cuts in its gifted program. Jonathan's working-class parents own a deli, and can't afford private school tuition. The boy's mother says, *"I want to know what do we do with this boy? He's dying to learn... I'm not looking for handouts, I'm looking for some place to send my child"* (Winerip, 1993, p. B19).

The new federal report has little good news for the Jonathans of this world. Indeed, some of its findings, such as the sheer depth of anti-intellectualism in American schools, are deeply troubling. Taunts of gifted students, such as "nerd" and "dweeb," are common (p. 13). Some gifted African-American students who choose to achieve academically are accused of "acting white" (p. 13).

For years, educators of gifted children have been encouraged to cooperate with general education. However, in the rhetoric of school reform, little has been written about the responsibilities of general education to its most gifted students. They, too, are required by compulsory attendance laws to attend school. Even the most profoundly gifted child is part of the community of "all children," mentioned so often in the literature of school reform.

Each time a taunt based on a child's exceptionality (such as "nerd" or "dweeb") is permitted in the classroom or on the playground, each time a highly gifted child is deliberately held back academically, each time a school policy prohibits academic acceleration or continuous progress, we need to ask, "What messages are we giving *all children* about developing talents, about the value of academic achievement, and about intellectual diversity?" The school climate needs to support all students—including the most gifted. We would never allow racial or ethnic slurs to go on unchecked in today's schools, nor would we deliberately thwart the intellectual growth of a child with a disability. Yet, profoundly gifted children (and their families) routinely must deal with these issues, based not on disability but on extreme developmental asynchrony. General education has a fundamental responsibility to these children.

Education's Responsibility to the Highly Gifted

✦ *In Hippocrates's words, "First, do no harm." School personnel must read the literature on extreme giftedness, and take the time to understand the individual child. Real damage has been done to these children by well-meaning professionals who insisted on maintaining institutional policies and philosophies at the expense of a child's development (Gross, 1993).*

✦ *The school climate must be free from taunts and jeers based on race, sex, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, or ability. Every child not only has a right to be in school, but is required to be there by law. It is the responsibility of the school to maintain a school climate that will not be hostile to any child.*

✦ *Itellectual diversity must be respected.*

✦ *Strategies that have proven effective for extremely gifted children—acceleration, continuous progress, intensive enrichment, and access to academic opportunities without discrimination on the basis of chronological age—must be regularly available. For profoundly gifted children, access to such strategies is essential in order for them to learn, much as other strategies are essential for children with disabilities.*

✦ *Extremely gifted children must neither be ignored nor exploited in school. Certain popular educational strategies, such as cooperative learning, can exploit these children, especially if they are permitted no time with intellectual peers and no regular, daily access to curriculum at an appropriate level of difficulty.*

School is a place for learning. The message we give to *all children* about learning is linked in part to how we treat our most rapid learners. If they are ignored, exploited, damaged, held back in their progress, or teased, the message we give to all children is that academic learning doesn't pay for anyone.

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IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY

Creative Ventures And Encounters

Jerry Flack

Tour Guide

Fairy Tales, Part I

Fantasy is the most valuable attribute of the human mind and should be diligently nutured from the earliest childhood.
Choukovsky

On this journey we will travel to the France of Perrault and the Black Forest of the Brothers Grimm. Fairy tales are wonderfully rich literature for developing the creativity and imagination of youth. There are no limits to the kinds and numbers of creative products students can create in response to their interactions with fairy tales.

Students may observe other people's creativity and originality by examining some current retellings of classic fairy tales that are delightful. In *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* by A. Wolf, Jon Scieszka gives the wolf a forum to tell his side of the story. He only went to the first little pig's house of straw to borrow a cup of sugar. Could he help it if his sneezing fit destroyed the little pig's home? *The Frog Prince Continued* is a further whimsical treatment of a fairy tale in which Scieszka explores the proposition that perhaps the princess and the frog did not live happily ever after in the palace. Fiona French brings Snow White into the modern era marvelously in *Snow White in New York*. In a most clever twist, Bernice Myers tells the story of a young man who yearns to be a football star in *Sidney Rella and the Glass Sneaker*. Students will quickly see the resemblance between Sidney's story and that of Cinderella. Once students have read and enjoyed these creative stories, they will be motivated to create their own innovative retelling of classic fairy tales.

One of the most recent and charming creations is *The Jolly Postman* by Janet Ahlberg and Allan Ahlberg. Riding his bicycle, a jolly English postman delivers letters and notes to fairy tale characters that include the Three Bears, Cinderella, and B. B. Wolf, Esq. B. B. Wolf's letter is from a legal firm representing Little Red Riding Hood. They inform the wolf that he must quit wearing LRRH's grandmother's clothing and that he should vacate her grandmother's cottage immediately.

The responses of students to fairy tales will be rich and diverse. Creative drama is one good place to begin imaginative explorations. A *tableau* is a still-life scene depicting a moment in literature. It may be compared to a "stop action" shot in cinema. Divide students into groups and ask each group to dramatize five scenes from a classic fairy tale in five tableaux so that when revealed in sequence the five scenes tell the story of *Little Red Riding Hood, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty* or *Hansel and Gretel*.

Students can create wonderful improvisations based on classic fairy tales and modern interpretations. For example, they can bring to life scenes artistically portrayed in *The Jolly Postman*. How might a scene between the wolf in grandmother's clothes and Little Red Riding Hood's attorney be played? An ogre has disappeared from the neighborhood. Has he been murdered? Creative students can improvise and act out a clever murder mystery based on Puss 'n Boots. Incidentally, a superb example of artistic creativity may be seen in the lush illustrations Fred Marcellino conceived for Malcolm Arthur's translation of Charles Perrault's *Puss in Boots*.

On our next journey, we will explore many creative writing encounters young people can have with fairy tales.

(Continued on page 18)

Mary Lynn Baum

from parent to parent

More on Valuing Parents: Valuing Ourselves

At the recent National Association for Gifted Children meetings in Atlanta, I had the opportunity to meet a number of parents and educators who are living with and working with gifted youngsters. I was struck again by the number of people involved professionally with gifted children who have been impelled to work in this field because of their personal experiences as parents of gifted children. Many of us, however, don't give ourselves much credit for the expertise that we gain while "just a parent." The "imposter syndrome" is alive and well among parents of gifted children.

A conversation I had with one woman was especially instructive. Cathleen will soon complete her doctorate in the education of the gifted. She is no newcomer to the field, however, having reared three gifted children, the youngest of whom is 23, a talent search alumnus and current graduate student. When I questioned Cathleen about entering the field as a parent first, she remarked, "Even now that I'm finishing my Ph.D., when I get among these professionals, I always feel self-conscious and insecure."

As difficult as we may find it, we parents need to rid ourselves of that sense of inferiority among "the professionals." We need to recognize our own strengths: we not only have valuable perceptions about our own children—which some teachers and schools are beginning to acknowledge—we also have (to varying degrees) a specialist's knowledge of the field. Many of us have seized every opportunity to attend workshops about gifted children and their educational and social/emotional needs. Usually these sessions have been presented expressly for parents by support and advocacy associations; more rarely, we have had opportunities to sit side by side with teachers in professional development sessions. Whatever the nature of the workshops, however, many parents of gifted children have had far more training about the education and psychology of the gifted than most classroom teachers.

It is understandable that some teachers might find this situation threatening, especially if they think that those parents will want to tell them what and how to teach. I don't think that's what most parents want, however. What we do want is to be involved in a meaningful and substantial way in the decisions that affect our children. Despite the current talk about effective partnerships between parents and the schools, there is little question about who is the junior partner in the relationship—or about who holds the power. This balance needs to change.

The other side of this issue, though, is that we parents have to stop thinking of ourselves as "just a parent." If we want "the professionals" to think of us as colleagues, we need to start thinking of ourselves in that way as well. If our children's needs are to be met, parents, teachers and counselors need to work in a fruitful collaboration on their behalf. An important step toward that collaborative effort is seeing ourselves as *equal partners* in the endeavor.

Mary Lynn Baum is past president of the Gifted Children's Association of British Columbia, Canada, editor since 1983 of its newsletter, ***Bright Connections***, and the parent of a highly gifted teenager.

Fairy Tales (Continued)

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Dorothy Knopper

ANTENNA . . . .

Current Developments in Gifted Education

This column is subtitled *Current Developments in Gifted Education*. I have searched for years for a sensational happening to write about in our long-suffering field. Now, at last, the United States Department of Education has published a new report, *National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent* (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1993). It is certainly current, but will it be the **DEVELOPMENT** I've been waiting for?

The document begins with a description of a "quiet crisis in educating talented students" (p.5). Quiet? Judging from the newspaper coverage across the country (*New York Times, Chicago Tribune, Denver Post, USA Today*) resulting from the published report, the situation seems anything but quiet.

According to *Chicago Tribune* columnist Joan Beck (1993), "*It* [the report] *squeaks when it should roar. It suggests when it should demand. It talks in educationese when it should blow a trumpet* "(p.31).

National Excellence does contain some powerful data about the poor performance of America's top students, elementary through college and into the business world. It points out the lack of challenging curriculum for our brightest students who consequently do not compare favorably with their counterparts in other countries.

The report states that schools must identify gifted and talented students through a system that:

- *Seeks variety*
- *Uses many assessment measures*
- *Is free of bias*
- *Is fluid*
- *Identifies potential*
- *Assesses motivation* (p.26).

The national report concludes with recommendations for action:

- *Establish challenging curriculum standards*
- *Establish high-level learning opportunities*
- *Ensure access to early childhood education*
- *Expand opportunities for economically disadvantaged and minority children*
- *Encourage appropriate teacher training and technical assistance*
- *Match world performance* (pp. 27-29).

Not since *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, the 1983 report published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education, has our country admitted such educational neglect among our most gifted students. There are other sounds of hope. The resolution adopted by delegates to the National Education Association Representative Assembly in September, 1993, begins with the following statement:

> *The National Education Association believes there must be increased development of fully funded educational programs for gifted, talented and creative students* [(Announcement in *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 1993, *17*(1), 3)].

And just the other day I heard from a reliable source that the president of a prominent university gets more calls concerning gifted education than any other single issue.

No, the crisis is not quiet. It's earsplitting and overwhelming, more like a heavy-metal concert than a lullaby. The new report has the power to be that **DEVELOPMENT** we're waiting for. It's up to us to make sure that it's loud enough to hear.

Publisher's Note:
***National Excellence: A Case for Developing America's Talent* can be ordered from the U.S. Government Printing Office, (202)783-3238, order #065-000-00603-1.**

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ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED UNDERACHIEVING STUDENTS (AEGUS)

April 22-23, 1994. This is the 7th annual conference of AEGUS on "Developing Gifts: Celebrating Diversity in Underachieving Gifted Children." University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis, MN Campus. For additional information, contact Diane Poague, AEGUS Conference Coordinator, University of St. Thomas, CHC-131, 2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105. (612) 962-5431.

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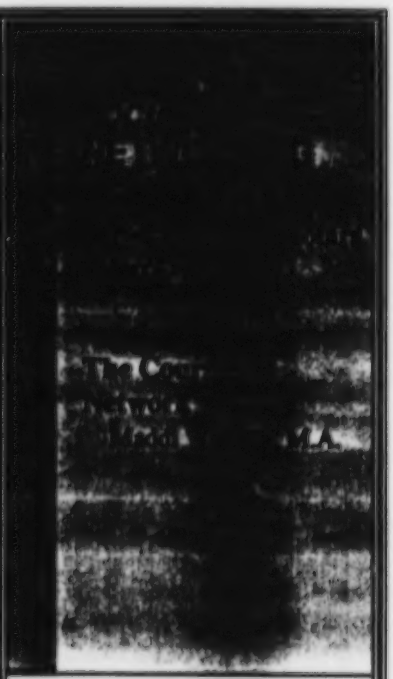

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A Network of Scholars

Jerry Flack, Ph.D.

Colorado is among the many states in the nation without endorsement or certification for educators who specialize in meeting the learning needs of gifted, creative, and talented students. For more than two decades, educators in the state have tried unsuccessfully to bring forth a state department of education endorsement to affirm and validate the training, research, and work experience many educators of gifted learners possess. So, we finally took matters into our own hands and developed a proactive stance on professional recognition. Admittedly, professional training and practice do not automatically guarantee educational excellence. Nevertheless, these experiences increase the possibility that practitioners have developed fundamental knowledge and skills related to serving these students and are aware of the most effective practices for meeting their educational and psychological needs. Moreover, endorsement provides reward and professional recognition for the hard work, individual effort, and service of master teachers.

In May, 1992, a small group of professional educators and researchers of gifted persons in Colorado met to

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FOCUS ON:

NETWORKING

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Maddi Wallach, M.A.

Adult Characteristics of Giftedness

Many highly gifted individuals reach adulthood without even knowing they are gifted because this population is not well understood or accepted by society in childhood or adult life. The characteristics of highly gifted adults are not what most people associate with giftedness. In addition, many of these characteristics are not prized by society or well-suited to the social norms of either childhood or adult institutions.

For example, a child who is chronologically seven but functions with a mental age of 12, and, on occasion, the emotional age of five, is a problem for the school system. A university professor who questions the basic assumptions of her field, who is morally outraged by the competitive pecking order in her department, and who cannot express her ideas without becoming emotional, will be considered an unprofessional fringe element.

Understanding Our Gifted has explored the characteristics and internal experiences of gifted children, and has recognized the importance of

(Continued on page 11)

FROM THE EDITOR

Greetings from Down Under!

We are excited to report that the concept of giftedness as "asynchronous development" has received enthusiastic international endorsement from as far away as Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia! In this issue, Maddi Wallach advances the concept further with a look at asynchrony in adults, and the necessity for gifted adults to network with each other. Maddi asked a gifted young woman with whom she works, *"How does your giftedness manifest?"* The woman responded, *"Empathy. I feel other people's pain so deeply and the pain of the world so deeply that sometimes it's disabling."* Empathy, moral sensitivity and intensity appear to be critical markers of giftedness. In her column, Dee Lovecky describes how this moral sensitivity is compromised by *"the media blitz promoting violence as the only way to solve all problems."*

From the wonderful feedback we have received from our subscribers, as well as the positive reception of audiences throughout the world, it is evident that our focus on the inner experiences of the gifted resonates deeply with many individuals. Referring to Martha Morelock's article, "Giftedness: The View from Within," in the January, 1992, issue of *UOG*, Kathy Courchene writes:

Many of the issues that Ms. Morelock raised struck a responsive chord in me... I no longer think that I am "wrong" or that I am "crazy," thanks to folks like you and Ms. Morelock who have published so much about what giftedness is, and what it means.

Please see "Personality Plus" (p.7) for more excerpts from Kathy's letter.
Letters like this give us at *Understanding Our Gifted* the strength to keep on going. Thanks to all of you who have taken the time to dialogue with us. We need to hear from you.

This issue is a response to previous letters asking for advice on how to network. In Jerry Flack's lead article, professionals in the field will discover an exciting new model for networking with each other. Many of our regular columnists echo this theme, providing concrete ideas on how students, parents, and educators can connect with each other in person and via computer networks. Why not start an Internet file on Asynchrony and see what happens? Let us know!

We also have a reaction from Rick Ronvik to John Feldhusen's rejoinder, printed in the last issue. And so the dialogue continues. We hope you will become an active part of that dialogue in your own community. And keep those letters coming!

Linda Silverman

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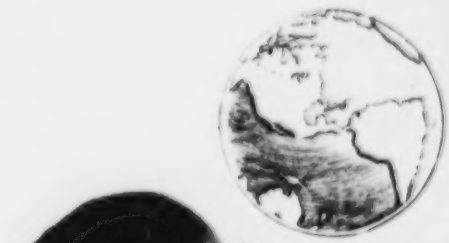
Deirdre V. Lovecky

IDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

The Moral Gifted Child in a Violent World



The literature suggests that young gifted children show unusual moral sensitivity and compassion for their ages. For example, Silverman (1993) described 2 1/2 year old Sara Jane, who volunteered her piggy bank and later her Christmas gifts for needy people. Roeper (1988) has long reported on moral concerns of gifted children ranging from unfairness and injustice to worries about peace, the environment and other world concerns.

My own work with gifted children also suggests unusual moral and social concerns. Both boys and girls worry about war, the environment, the homeless, poverty, crime and drugs. And yet, for many gifted boys, there is also a fascination with violence. These boys do not see the connection between the toys and games they want which encourage violent play and their later actions. The gifted child takes no more responsibility for the occurrence of violent actions than does a more average child. In fact, many of the gifted boys I have questioned see violence as the only solution to interpersonal conflicts.

Both the influence of peers and of the media around them appear to place gifted children, particularly boys, in conflict with their inner most feelings and judgments. To continue with the generous, compassionate and altruistic responses of early childhood places many gifted boys at considerable risk for peer rejection and ridicule. They are too vulnerable this way, so they often conceal the moral side of themselves behind the same invulnerability modeled for them by others; that is, they wall off and deny compassionate responses to others. Familiarity with media heroes makes it easier to laugh at pain, to go along with intolerance, to learn to tease others and to try to fit in. One is not teased if one is able to recite the entire plot of a gruesome movie or tell all the jokes from Beevus and Butthead's latest episode.

In America we value freedom from censorship so highly that we place it ahead of all other values and moral principles; instead, we should see it as one of a set of values we need to balance when dealing with young minds that have not yet the maturity to resist pressure to conform. Denison (1993) points out that, in Finland, children are valued so highly that in 1990 the Finns banned a McDonald's commercial because it exploited the loneliness of children. Yet, in this country children have few resources to deal with the media blitz promoting violence as the only way to solve all problems. Even gifted children fall heir to this legacy.

Helping gifted boys to deal with the problem of media pressure and the consequent pull towards aggression and violence means helping them first define that there is inner conflict between what they feel about moral issues and how they see others and themselves behaving. Second, parents and teachers of gifted children need to talk directly about the issues of fitting in, being rejected for one's beliefs, and making decisions about actions based on moral beliefs and not just on conformity to a media model. Third, parents will have to be courageous and say "no" to some toys, games, television shows and movies. If we expect children to resist pressure and define moral concerns, we need to provide them with role models who think out these issues themselves. Parents cannot just assume that anything children view is all right if we view it with them; children see things not with our adult eyes, but with their own immature, media-conditioned and fearful eyes. Finally, we need to give all children better models for interpersonal problem solving. There are curricula developed by peace organizations, such as The War Resister's League, which stress nonviolent solutions to life problems. Investing in them should be among a school's priorities.

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Annemarie Roeper

PARENTING

The Innocence of Childhood

Children, especially gifted children, know when they are being deceived. They also know when they are expected to go along with the deception. Most know that they are expected to believe in Santa Claus or the "Tooth Fairy," and to be thankful on Thanksgiving. But some wonder, *"Must I be thankful when my cousin comes to visit on Thanksgiving and destroys my toys?" "Are homeless children thankful?"* These are questions thought about by children, but not often asked.

Many adults try to protect their children from the truth in order to maintain the "innocence of childhood." Children go along with the game, but it makes them feel lonely and deeply suspicious. Without intending to, we often tell our children how to think and feel: *"You must be grateful"; "You must love your siblings"; "Don't worry, everything is fine."* We act as if we could make these things true simply by saying them out loud. Gifted children, whose intuition works overtime, know there are many complex situations, thoughts and feelings that are not positive. But the child feels prohibited from feeling them, let alone expressing them, and may develop guilt feelings over negative thoughts.

A five-year-old girl once told me that her aunt and uncle would not tell her that her parents had been injured in a car accident, but she knew something was very wrong. *"It was so scary because no one told me what was going on. I just knew something was wrong. I even felt better when they finally told me that my Mom and Dad had been hurt in a car accident."*

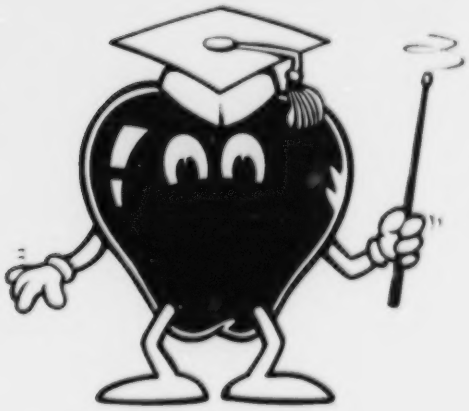
One of humanity's best developed skills is denial. This is true for nations as well as individuals. We have denied our mistreatment of the Indians; Germans do not teach their children about the holocaust, and some deny it ever happened; we pretend that families feel loving toward each other every moment. It may appear to be the only way we can cope with our personal problems or the enormous problems of the world. But even those of us who value honesty and awareness often "shield" children from the truth. It is as though we believe the world is so filled with problems that we must create a make-believe world for our children. Our intention is to preserve their trust for as long as possible, but the lesson they learn is actually *distrust*. The child senses the deception and, not knowing what is being withheld, fears the worst.

Is the "innocence of childhood," then, a myth? No, it definitely exists, and it is magnified in the gifted. We find it in those children who have been dealt with truthfully. There is immense safety and comfort in truth. Children can relax in the bond of trust that comes with being included in the world of the adult—even if it is painful. They lose their innocence only when they are exposed to deception. And only when they know the difference between truth and fantasy can they use their imaginations without fear.

Does that mean we have to give up Santa Claus? Not necessarily. The gifted understand and enjoy at an early age the meaning of symbols. Santa Claus as a symbol of goodness and peace is a comforting thought for them. But if they choose not to believe, that choice also needs to be supported.

Since I am writing this during the holiday season, I would not let the opportunity go by to wish you a good New Year and to express my hope that we can create a world which will allow our children the innocence of childhood.

Dr. Annemarie Roeper is a consultant on the gifted in Oakland, California, and author of the book, ***Educating Children for Life.*** Co-founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the ***Roeper Review***, Annemarie has inspired a worldwide focus on global awareness in gifted education.



INSTRUCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Networking is a critical, often overlooked, component of the education of gifted students. An important realization for gifted children is that, while they are very different from many of their classmates, some other people are of like mind, and rewarding, exciting intellectual and emotional interactions are possible. The difference a single intellectual peer can make in the self-concept and general attitude of a gifted child should not be underestimated. This one factor can change personal outlook, academic achievement and direction from negative or non-committed to positive and pro-active.

Networking ideally occurs at three levels: among students, parents, and teachers. I will consider each of these levels and how networking can be accomplished by each group.

From a very early age, gifted children need to be led to establish and nurture ties to other gifted persons, preferably near-age peers. A major problem, of course, is *finding* another gifted child with whom the child relates and who, therefore, is a possible connection. The effort parents and teachers at the preschool level make to foster early connections will be well rewarded. Getting to know the parents of other gifted children is necessary, and probably is best done through a parent advocacy organization. As children enter and progress in school, potential friends may be found through pursuit of interests such as music or chess, or, occasionally, in school classes, clubs, or other extra-curricular activities.

Parenting is often a lonely task, and certainly parenting a gifted child is even more so. Finding others who face these challenges and who deal with similar issues is like the proverbial breath of fresh air. Not only can parents be reassured that they are not alone in the demanding responsibilities they face, but they also can use each other as valuable resources. Discussing challenges met and sharing solutions to problems give parents much needed support and relief. As they feel more comfortable and relaxed in their Herculean tasks, their children will sense their assurance and feel less anxious about themselves and their differentness.

Parents may connect with others through membership in local associations related to gifted children or, as their children form linkages, with parents of their children's friends.

Educators of the gifted face isolation similar to that of the parents of their students. As programs are cut and teachers are stretched ever thinner, they become a rarer and rarer breed. A single teacher may serve as a resource teacher at five or more school sites. Their frustrations at what they are able to offer their students and the stress of constantly moving from site to site may seem overwhelming at times. For personal and professional reasons, educators need to network with each other to share ideas and offer moral support and empathy.

The best way for educators to network is through a professional organization. If active participation in such a body is not feasible, attendance at state or national conferences is critical. Conventions and conferences offer a mother lode of ideas, materials, sharing, and support.

Networking is a necessity; it consists of relationships or connections we make with those who are not related by family or formal ties. It gives each of us the support and nurturance we need to be who we are and become what we can become. This necessary ingredient may not be part of the life of gifted children unless adults take steps to ensure its inclusion.

Shirley W. Schiever, Ph.D., is a curriculum specialist at the Fine Arts Magnet School in Tucson, Arizona, and the author of ***A Comprehensive Approach to Teaching Thinking***.

Stephanie S. Tolan

THE READING ROOM

In 1950 e. e. cummings wrote a poem in which he said that not until nature behaved the way human beings do, would he believe in that "unanimal," mankind. Though we cannot quote from the poem without paying the publisher a substantial fee, you can find it in *100 Selected Poems*, Grove Press, 1959. (In that volume it is #89; in other anthologies you can find it by its first line, "when serpents bargain for the right to squirm.") Imagining nature with human characteristics, cummings saw oaks having to ask birch trees to let them make acorns, valleys taking offense at the altitude of mountains, March resenting April. We were reminded of this poem as we read last fall's federal report, *National Excellence*, on the state of gifted education in America. [See *UOG, 6*(2), 2, 15, 16, 19.] Forty-five years after cummings wrote that poem, mankind hasn't changed much.

It should be no surprise to any of us that anti-intellectualism continues to flourish in a country which began with the Declaration of Independence. Jefferson's words—*"all men are created equal"*—remain our most enduring cultural slogan. Unfortunately for gifted children, that slogan has been distorted to mean to many people that no one should (or does) come into the world with any greater potential than anyone else. (Most of us accept that some people are born to be more beautiful or taller, or even more athletic. But brighter? Never.)

In America today perhaps more than ever before in our rabidly egalitarian history, valleys resent the altitude of mountains. Recognizing the gifted student's innate reality, we fear, may make another student feel inadequate. So the politically correct thing to do is treat everyone "equally." Never mind that Zachary already reads; give him phonics worksheets with the rest of his class. Never mind that Katie understands fractions and percents, keep her adding and subtracting two digit numbers with "her group." Unless all trees can make acorns, none of them shall!

Many of our most intelligent children sit day after day, year after year, in heterogeneous classrooms learning little or nothing. And few who champion this kind of education consider what must happen either to individual children or to a country that distrusts differences, disallows gifts, and insists there must be no "best and brightest."

In 1960 Kurt Vonnegut took on our cultural blind spot, writing "Harrison Bergeron," a short story included in his book, *Welcome to the Monkey House*.

"The year was 2081," it begins, *"and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law, they were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else; nobody was better looking than anybody else; nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else."* All this, we learn, has been accomplished by law under the aegis of the United States Handicapper General and her agents. Beautiful people are required to wear ugly masks, strong people to carry heavy weights, and intelligent people to wear "handicap radios" in their ears. These radios, connected to a government transmitter, emit mind-shattering sounds at random intervals to keep bright people from following a line of thought and thus "taking unfair advantage of their brains."

Now workers get and keep their jobs by being not very good at them (not any better than anyone else). Nothing, therefore, is done well. People might get upset at that if they could think long enough to get upset about anything.

Harrison Bergeron is a threat to this brave new world because at 14 he is impossibly bright, handsome, tall, athletic and strong. Taken from his parents' home by the H-G Men, he escapes, breaks into a television station, rips off his handicaps and proclaims himself Emperor. Taking a ballerina for his Empress, Harrison dances to the beat of his true reality.

In such a world his fate is inevitable. Vonnegut's biting satire should keep kids discussing the pros and cons of equality until the next federal report.

Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child.*

Personality Plus

Asynchrony in Adults

In our lead article, "The Courage to Network," Maddi Wallach shows how asynchrony continues to be relevant in adult life. Many parents of gifted children feel out-of-sync with others. However, Maddi's insightful observation that many gifted children arrive at adulthood *"with extraordinary abilities and unusual deficits"* (p. 11) adds an entirely new dimension to the concept of giftedness as asynchronous development. The need for such an article was brought home strikingly by a recent letter from Kathy Courchene from Snellville, Georgia:

...Why are these problems of asynchrony usually examined as ***children's*** *problems?*

It is true that this difficulty begins in childhood, but does it really ever end? I remember vividly troublesome and troubling episodes from my own childhood that were due to asynchronous development—though of course I didn't know anything about the concept at the time—and I also see my own children struggling with this difficulty. I'd like to be able to tell them that it will not be a problem when they are older, but I can't honestly say that!

...I have to admit that I, like many other gifted adults in my milieu, am working through many unresolved issues from my own past as I am learning and working to improve education and social acceptance for my own children. It was thrilling to read a confirmation of my own long-held view that 'giftedness' is about the inner life, and not what one does, or produces!

...The important thing to remember is that giftedness is a way of being. It is internal, and intrinsic to the personality. It may or may not be expressed in great achievements. ***Highly gifted people can and do live very 'normal'-looking lives, while at the same time are living a parallel, inner life that is not 'normal' at all.*** *[emphasis added]*

Sometimes the inner life can complicate the outer one, but just knowing more about the inner life, and its reasons for being, are immensely helpful in making both lives mesh.

I was an art major in college... However, I have done very little, professionally, as an artist, and am not now earning my living as an artist. I don't know, at this point, if I will ever choose to do so. So, am I an artist, or not? Our society generally defines an artist as someone who is actively engaged as an artist, showing her/his art to the public, perhaps earning money from the works, or just regularly producing works of art for whatever purpose. I am doing none of these things at this time. So again I ask: am I allowed to call myself an artist?

I believe that the answer is yes. I am an artist not because of what I may or may not ***produce****, but because of the way in which I see. As I look at the world around me, I am always aware of patterns, of contrasts, of line and mass. I make art in my mind, as I perceive certain things visually, and translate them. Obviously I have no driving need at this point in my life to put these things down on paper for others to look at, or else I would probably be doing just that. Right now, I am content with my internal life as an artist, and am at peace with my view that what an artist is lies inside, not in what is produced outside.*

In the same way, then, I have come to apply this to my view of giftedness. I am not saying that I never feel lonely or out of step, but I am more content to live with this asynchrony because I do not feel that I have to achieve in a way that would meet society's image of giftedness, nor do I feel obligated to buy into the tendency to minimize the differences. I finally accept asynchrony as a way of life, plan to learn more about it, and hope to be able to continue to have a dialogue with others who share the same concerns.

Yes, Kathy, you *are* an artist! I was deeply touched by your wisdom and wanted to share as much of it as possible with our readers. It is exciting to discover new facets and implications of the theory of asynchrony filtered through the personal experiences of Maddi Wallach and Kathy Courchene.

Linda Silverman, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist, Director of the Gifted Development Center in Denver, Colorado, and Editor of ***Counseling the Gifted and Talented.***

ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT

ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT: A Journal on Adult Giftedness

Gifted children usually have gifted parents. If you are wondering about your own giftedness, subscribe to ***Advanced Development: A Journal on Adult Giftedness.*** No other journal focuses specifically on gifted adults. Unlike the traditional view of adult giftedness as high levels of productivity and creativity, advanced development in adults is defined as the deepening of the personality and strengthening of human values such as empathy, concern for others, responsibility and integrity.

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explore the potential for creating a state-wide professional academy for educators of gifted, talented, and creative students. The purpose of the proposed Academy would be to provide validation for the training and experiences of the state's professional educators of gifted and talented students. Such an organization would not just be another certification agency. Any agency can check a person's paperwork. Nomination to the Academy would assure that a respected professional shepherded a candidate's membership in the Academy and would stand by the nominee's quality of professional work. There was unanimous agreement that the proposed Academy was needed and that it would provide a valuable service in the state.

In this article I will describe how classroom teachers, school administrators, researchers, publishers, private consultants, and university faculty members who serve gifted, talented, and creative persons in one state worked cooperatively to create a professional academy.

Networking was a critical factor in the formation of the Academy. At each stage of development, all founding members received information about proposed ideas and were asked to provide feedback during the critical evolutionary stages of the organization's formation. Networking continues to be the lifeblood of the fledgling organization that is now two years old.

Nothing in the nominating procedures or organizational structure is fixed. As we continue to grow, we are creating a viable, living organization fitted to the needs of its members. Some examples: The Board of Governors was increased from five members to eight this past year to facilitate a greater sharing of the work load of the officers and to bring the views of our newest members to the forefront. Current governors are charged with the responsibility of writing their own job descriptions to reflect the real duties and responsibilities they are experiencing. At a recent meeting of Academy members, the goal statement of the organization was revised to reflect the direction the growing, evolving organization is taking. Healthy discussions of the membership nominating procedures have led to the decision to allow twice as many new members to join the Academy in the coming year.

In formative discussions a new conceptual approach to the Academy was considered and adopted. The original notion of a professional organization with the sole purpose of providing a peer form of endorsement was dropped in favor of a broader conception of an academy of professional educators whose interests included service and professional growth as well as competence validation.

As the founding members networked with still other educators in the state, it became apparent that this newer and enlarged conception of the proposed Academy's purpose was appealing because it appeared to have great potential for accomplishing many aims among educators of gifted students in Colorado, not the least of which might be the **mentoring** of newer members in the field by more experienced members of the profession. The potential for creating important links and networks among members was also appealing.

Once the broader concept of the Academy was embraced by the founding members, much of the rest of the work of creating the organization fell into place quickly and easily. Early discussions revealed the need to formally state the goals of the proposed Academy. A goal statement was drafted and worked on over a period of several months by the founders. The resultant goal statement of the Colorado Academy of Educators for the Gifted, Talented, and Creative appears in Figure 1.

The Academy is modeled on such professional and honorary organizations as Phi Delta Kappa and the American Bar Association. Membership in the Colorado Academy of Educators for the Gifted, Talented, and Creative is active and participatory, for a lifetime, and—at the present time—by invitation. Academy membership is for professional educators who have demonstrated levels of high performance and competence, and requires a professional investment greater than the mere payment of dues. Professional persons who serve gifted, talented, and creative students and who have met criteria similar to those used by many states for endorsement or certification are invited into membership in the Academy. An induction ceremony is held annually to induct new members. New members receive framed certificates of membership.

Considerable care has been taken to be sure that the Academy does not compete with existing gifted education organizations in the state. Academy members, for example, continue to have important and very positive links with the Colorado Association for the Gifted and Talented (CAG/T), the state's largest parent-teacher advocacy organization for gifted students.

The membership criteria for the Academy was established through discussions and communications among founding members over a period of several months. The purpose of the membership nomination process is to locate and encourage membership in the Academy of all interested persons who professionally serve the gifted, talented, and creative population in Colorado. Academy membership criteria and suggested forms of portfolio documentation for each criterion are outlined in Figure 2.

A NETWORK OF SCHOLARS Continued from page 8

In August, 1992, the ten founding members were inducted into the Colorado Academy of Educators for the Gifted, Talented, and Creative. The founding members included classroom teachers, university professors, researchers, psychologists, a private foundation leader, a publisher and private consultant, a district-wide administrator of programs for gifted students, and the state department of education consultant for gifted education. The founding members all have been actively involved in gifted child education for a minimum of ten years. All of the founding members filed membership portfolios fully documenting the many ways in which they themselves meet all membership criteria for the Academy.

How the Academy Membership Grows

In the first year of operation, each founding member nominated three professional educators for Academy membership. The membership rules of the Academy specifically state the responsibility of the nominating members to make sure that all persons they nominate for membership meet all criteria for Academy membership and that the nominee's work is considered exemplary by at least one member. Such personal contact was designed to avoid the rejection of any nominated candidate.

Nominations for membership are submitted to the membership governor, who then forwards application packets to all nominees. The nominees prepare and submit portfolios documenting the ways they meet the five criteria for Academy membership. The Academy's board of governors reviews all portfolios to determine that the membership qualifications, indeed, have been met. The presiding governor then formally sends letters of invitation to new members. New members are inducted at an annual meeting which may coincide with another state-wide educational event or through a separate meeting of the Academy membership.

The membership procedures are designed to facilitate the smooth growth of the organization. In the second year of the Academy's existence, each founding member nominated two additional professional educators for membership in the Academy class of 1994. The addition of 20 new members brought the Academy's membership roll to nearly 60 persons. In 1995 and thereafter, members who have been in the Academy for two years may nominate two persons for membership annually. Hence, the potential for the Academy to grow exponentially exists. Exclusivity is not the aim of the Academy.

At the 1993 induction ceremony of the first class of members, the first numbered certificate of the Academy was posthumously awarded to Rita Dickinson, a remarkable Colorado pioneer in the psychology and education of gifted students. Dr. Dickinson studied 20,000 gifted children for 40 years at her own expense. Most of these children were from disadvantaged backgrounds. Her research efforts established that gifted children are equally distributed in all socioeconomic levels, and that poorer children are least often recognized.

Numbered certificates, 02 through 100, have been reserved for honoring individuals who have made very special contributions to gifted, talented, and creative students in the state. Thus far, Irving Sato, a prior state consultant, John F. Feldhusen, and Joyce Van Tassel-Baska have been so honored.

Figure 1

Colorado Academy of Educators for the Gifted,Talented, and Creative

Academy Belief Statement

We believe in the fundamental right of all children to receive an education commensurate with their talents and abilities. We believe that gifted, talented, and creative children and adolescents have special needs that require at least partial special educational services. We believe that it is critical that such services be facilitated and/or delivered by educators who have credentials that attest to their possession of a fundamental knowledge base and expert training in the nature and nurture of giftedness, and substantial working experiences with gifted, talented and creative youths. We believe that such fundamental knowledge, training, and experience cannot be left to whim or chance. We believe that current professional educators within the field of gifted child education in the state of Colorado who have a wealth of experience and knowledge are best suited to recognize expertise in others. We believe in professional excellence and peer review.

Academy Goal Statement

The Colorado Academy of Educators for the Gifted, Talented and Creative exists for the express purpose of recognizing, stimulating, nurturing, and strengthening professional excellence in the delivery of educational services to the vast population of gifted, talented, and creative children and youth in Colorado.

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Figure 2

Colorado Academy of Educators for the Gifted, Talented, and Creative

Membership Criteria and Portfolio Documentation

1. Current or former professional educator in the education and development of gifted, creative, and talented students.
   Examples: Professional teachers (K-12 or college), researchers, and psychologists.

   Proof of current or former employment, including specification of the type of work. Evidence may include letters on agency letterhead stationery, or comparable evidence.

2. Minimum of nine semester hours of graduate course work in the education of gifted students or comparable preparation.
   Examples:
   Curriculum for the Gifted
   Nature and Needs of the Gifted
   Nature of Intelligence
   Psycho-Social Needs
   Assessment of Gifted Students
   Content area classes for the gifted (e.g., mathematics)
   Transcripts or comparable evidence of academic expertise (e.g., syllabi from courses taught).

3. Minimum of one graduate course in statistics, research, measurement, and/or evaluation. Transcripts or comparable evidence.

4. Minimum of three years substantial practical experience with gifted youth.
   Examples: Classroom teaching, extra-school teaching (e.g., summer programs), direct research work, counseling.

   Description of practical experience, letters from supervisors, personnel directors, transcripts with practicum credit noted, or comparable evidence.

5. Substantial demonstrated service or contribution to gifted and talented education.
   Examples:
   Professional journal writing
   Presentations at conferences
   Officer in organizations and associations
   Editorship of professional newsletter, journal for gifted
   Pro bono work in the education of gifted youth
   Documentation and/or self-report of offices held, published works, presentations made, pro bono work, Colorado Department of Education committee work, or comparable evidence.

Academy Governance

The Colorado Academy of Educators for the Gifted, Talented, and Creative has a board of governors consisting of eight members: presiding governor, membership governor, fiscal governor, professional development governor, service governor, and three at-large governors. In concert with the total membership, the board of governors is drafting bylaws for the Academy, and the fiscal governor has submitted the Academy's application for Articles of Incorporation as a nonprofit organization. Governors network with the membership to determine how best to fulfill the Academy's service to its membership. For example, the professional development governor polled the current Academy membership to determine professional development priorities. This networking resulted in the expression of the following concerns.

The Academy should:

1. *Continue to recognize individuals for their exceptional contributions to the education of gifted, talented, and creative in the state.*
2. *Provide opportunities for communication among professional peers.*
3. *Influence political decisions regarding law, funding, and standards for our gifted, talented, and creative children and youth.*
4. *Publish newsletters and pamphlets related to our field.*
5. *Provide a clearinghouse of human, print, and electronic resources related to special education for gifted, talented, and creative students.*

Governors serve two-year terms of office, and no Academy member may serve on the board of governors more than two consecutive years. All members must rotate off the board of governors for a minimum of one

A NETWORK OF SCHOLARS Continued from page 10

calendar year before serving a subsequent term on the board. Provisions have been made to stagger the terms of the first board so that a complete turnover of leadership does not occur in any single year.

An initial membership fee of $45 is charged to all new Academy members. This fee pays for mailing costs, framed certificate of membership, and other benefits of Academy membership. Continuing, active membership requires a small payment of annual dues to cover the costs of mailings and continued documentation of active service to gifted education.

Members receive opportunities to network with each other. They are provided with membership lists that create opportunities to receive mailings and press releases about coming events. Members to date have received copies of newsletters, author signings, and other opportunities for professional networking. Academy members also receive priority notification of upcoming conferences and publications.

Conclusion

The founders of the Colorado Academy of Educators for the Gifted, Talented, and Creative worked cooperatively to create an organization that seeks to validate professional people for the course work, conference attendance, service, and personal time and commitment they have invested in the field of gifted child education. The Academy is similar to associations found in other professions that aim to establish standards of excellence within their province. The founding members believe they have created one alternative for professional endorsement that may serve as a model to educators in others states (or regional service districts, counties, cities, etc.) who desire endorsement or certification for educators of the gifted and talented. Several founding members of the Academy shared the formative work of developing the Academy with educators from several other states at the 1992 convention of the National Association for Gifted Children in Los Angeles.

It is hoped that in years to come the Academy will have a substantial and positive impact on the growth of professional development and service to the educators of gifted children in Colorado and beyond.

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is a President's Teaching Scholar and Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs. He is the author of several books, including ***Inventing, Inventions, and Inventors*** and ***Lives of Promise.***

THE COURAGE TO NETWORK Continued from page 1

asynchronous development in childhood [e.g., Morelock, 1992, *UOG*, *4*(3)]. But what are these children like when they grow up? Do they "fit better" into society's institutions than they did into school systems? Can giftedness go away? Does asynchrony even out? A very small but growing network of people has begun to try to understand the ramifications of asynchronous development throughout the life cycle, so that the answers to these questions can be discovered.

There are a multitude of lists of the traits of gifted children, but very few published inventories of the characteristics of gifted adults. The most comprehensive discussion of this topic found in the literature was Annemarie Roeper's (1991) "Gifted adults: Their characteristics and emotions." The following list of characteristics of gifted adults was compiled from a variety of sources, such as the Columbus Group, *Advanced Development Journal*, The Gifted Development Center, Annemarie Roeper's insights, and my own observations:

- ***Asynchronous development causing arrival at adulthood with extraordinary abilities and unusual deficits***
- ***The ability to connect, synthesize or distill normally unrelated domains***
- ***Multipotentiality***
- ***Perfectionism***
- ***Questioning***
- ***Extremely rapid learning***
- ***Love of ideas and ardent discussions***
- ***Feeling misunderstood***
- ***Feeling overwhelmed by the pressure of one's own intellectual, creative or emotional intensity***
- ***Increased level of inner conflict***
- ***Heightened sensitivity***
- ***Outrage at moral breaches that the rest of the world seems to take for granted***
- ***A need to search for meaning in both the inner and outer worlds***
- ***Developing one's own method of learning and grasping concepts***
- ***Retaining childlike emotions***
- ***Perceptively intuitive***
- ***A sense of alienation and loneliness***
- ***A feeling of coming apart***
- ***A feeling of being out of step, on a separate path***
- ***Unique perception and awareness***
- ***Preference for complexity and comfort with ambiguity***

If you see yourself in roughly two-thirds of this list, you are probably an unidentified or reconfirmed gifted adult. It is unlikely that anyone would fit all of the descriptors, due to human variation as well as suppression of some of these traits. If you have spent much of your life trying to conform or perform, some of these descriptors

might describe who you were as a child or who you really are, lurking under the surface, rather than who you think you are. Also, there are many kinds of gifted people. Some are linear sequential thinkers who explore ideas starting at point A, and move in sequence to arrive at point Z. In contrast, there are random, conceptual, abstract thinkers who might arrive at Z first, and work backwards in a random order or not want to fill in the details at all.

As you review this list, some of you may be considering the possibility of your own giftedness for the first time. Your reaction may be shock or a mixture of relief *(Finally, a description of me in print!)* and fear *(What are the implications of identifying myself as a gifted adult?)*. Most of you read *Understanding Our Gifted* to help you understand your children. Bumping into your own giftedness may be a twist you had not bargained for.

As gifted children grown up, and as parents of gifted children, we are often faced with the challenge of inventing new pathways and convincing ourselves, the schools, and the world that these pathways are necessary. This work can be overwhelming and redundant in isolation. Networking offers strategies and support for both children and adults. Being different in this society can be frightening. Talking to people who understand and can help makes facing the unknown and unusual needs of ourselves and our children much safer and easier.

The Emotional Impact of a Gifted Lifespan

The issues of special need around giftedness are multi-layered. Most parents of highly gifted children are, to one extent or another, casualties of a childhood where their needs as gifted children were misunderstood, pathologized or unmet. [See Tolan, 1992, *UOG, 4*(3).] Many still feel the pain of the myriad misinterpretations of their differentness. Mislabels such as "too sensitive," "overdisciplined" or "undisciplined," "argumentative," "out of step," "tangential," "hyperactive," "too intense," "perfectionistic" or "careless," "Martianistic," "showoffy," tore away their self-confidence until they went underground. It is intensely bittersweet to find out that these traits that brought so much shame are normal for the gifted.

According to most educators, and most people in general, high intelligence is related to advanced, sequential, *synchronous* development which allows people to excel and makes life easier. In school settings, if you enrich and slightly advance such children, they will do well. However, this does not describe people with high levels of giftedness, who are often extremely asynchronous in their development with an endless variety of patterns of strengths and weaknesses. This small percentage of the gifted population is so far away from the norm that they are profoundly, developmentally and affectively different—sometimes unrecognizable as gifted to their parents, themselves and especially schools and institutions at large. Even when they are recognized in the schools, the curriculum designed for normal and slightly advanced children their age does not meet their needs. If they lack interest in relearning material they already know or in practicing skills they have already mastered, they will often be blamed for their lack of motivation. As adults, they may not be able to "rise to the top," because they think too differently from the decision-makers in their fields. High levels of giftedness make life more complicated rather than easier.

Most parents of highly gifted children are, to one extent or another, casualties of a childhood where their needs as gifted children were misunderstood, pathologized or unmet.

Asynchronous development is difficult to recognize in childhood as well as in adulthood. An example is a nine-year-old child with an IQ of 191, who spells on a second grade level, adds and subtracts slowly, and writes slowly, but can do algebra, creates beautiful poetry, perceives psychologically and sociologically on an adult level, feels like she is being tortured if the work is repetitive, has adult empathy for the disenfranchised people of the world and the endangered earth and animals, loves to read, is a gifted gymnast, wears lipstick, has wit as sophisticated and as quick as an adult, and sleeps with a stuffed animal. If this girl were in a public school fourth grade, they might not even know she was gifted because within the context of the fourth grade curriculum, her areas of giftedness would not come into play very often. If they did notice, they would call her careless, lazy and would look for some psychological reason to explain her poor performance. She would be blamed and probably believe their judgments. So might her parents, unless they were aware of their own giftedness, had come to terms with their own pain, and were willing to advocate for their daughter.

Consider another configuration of asynchrony: a 38-year-old man with an IQ of 160. As a young child, he was very curious, extremely physically active, stubborn, mischievous, too socially gregarious in school, very intensely alive. His parents did not understand his exceptional giftedness or creativity or know how to manage his high energy.

They valued achievement by society's standards, and often abused him into toeing the mark. He graduated valedictorian of his high school, one of the top 20 basketball players in the country, serious, focused and achievement oriented—appearing by all external standards to be "fulfilling his potential"; however, internally, he was totally incongruent, living somebody else's empty dream, suicidal. He continued to perform for authority, always looking for the next award, until he was 33, and then he hit the wall. After much confusion and pain, he found his own path. He developed a life or death need to write and to follow his other passions as well. In this situation, there was severe asynchrony between his own internal needs and the expectations of his environment. When he tried to live up to his parents' expectations, he was out-of-sync with himself. In the gifted, the need to use their gifts is as intense as the gifts themselves. Failure to understand and actualize one's potential can cause pain severe enough to make a person want to die.

Talking about Giftedness is Taboo

Our society is poorly designed for the needs of the highly gifted. This group is invisible to the general population. Gifted adults, with or without children, dare not identify themselves. It is absolutely taboo to say your child—never mind you—is gifted. This is considered bragging; besides, everybody has gifts of equal value. Yes, the second part is true, and very important, but gifted people usually do not discuss their giftedness or the giftedness of their children for the purpose of bragging. Gifted people need to talk to each other because their development, experiences and needs are radically different from the norm. Parents of highly gifted children are usually left to improvise solutions to their problems in isolation. That is why networking with others of similar ability and concerns is essential.

Networking is also needed to gain basic information that is lacking in the literature. There are no books to guide parents of highly gifted children about the unique developmental patterns of their children. A mother of an exceptionally gifted child bought a book on early childhood development that included a range of developmental expectations. Her daughter was doing at four months what an active child was supposed to do at eight months, as well as many things that were not in the book at all. She purchased a book about gifted children, and still found no sign of her daughter. Numerous other books were also of little value. Everything her daughter did was considered "impossible" by most of the child development experts. At four months old, children do not understand what you are saying. You cannot reason with a six-month-old child. A 2 1/2 year old could not have curiosity about death.

"How old is your daughter?" asked the mother's friend's nine-year-old daughter. *"She's three,"* replied the mother. *"Then why does she talk like a nine year old?"* continued the girl. The mother became fearful. She knew it was boastful to say, *"My daughter is extremely intelligent,"* so she replied, *"Oh, she's just always liked words."*

This mother was placed in a tremendous double bind. On the one hand, she was afraid to talk about her daughter, and, on the other, she was desperate to talk about her, because the books were saying the child's existence was impossible. She became very anxious and lonely. She sensed the enormous potential in her child, hence her enormous responsibility as a parent. The accepted experts had nothing to offer her, and it was taboo to discuss the situation.

What the child development experts have to offer is actually **counter-productive**. They insinuate that early precocity is the exclusive product of bad parenting: parents mistakenly create high levels of giftedness by pushing intellectual growth at the expense of providing good, balanced development.

> *To elevate a child's intellectual growth to a position where it becomes of primary concern is, in my opinion, harmful to the child. In extensive observations of three to six year old children, we have found many children who are intellectually quite precocious, able to converse fluently, able to do simple arithmetic, equipped with all sorts of information far in excess of what most children their age have and yet are quite unhappy and uncomfortable in dealing with children and adults other than those in their nuclear family. My message is, beware of equating brightness with good development. Intellectual superiority is frequently obtained at the expense of progress in areas of equal or even greater importance.* (White, 1975, p. 35)

In the gifted, the need to use their gifts is as intense as the gifts themselves.

This is simply untrue. Many exceptionally gifted children begin to read, converse fluently, and do arithmetic before the age of three without being taught at all. Many will beg to be taught these things and volumes more. Some will have trouble with their peers, not because they have been pushed and raised in an unbalanced way, but because they are emotionally four and mentally nine, and there will be ways in which they need nine year olds as much as four year olds.

Many parents never find resources to help them deal with their exceptionally gifted children. Those who do have usually gone through a number of years of internal and external condemnation, loneliness and confusion first. This still leaves the problem of facing a critically misunderstanding and disbelieving world.

Networking Can Help

Raising an exceptionally gifted child often leads to deep levels of self-revelation. A mother described flashbacks to her own childhood that were painful, jarring and shocking. Was it possible that her own mother wasn't exaggerating when she claimed that she began speaking at six months? What about the songs and poetry she created at three, the books she memorized? Is that why she asked so many tangential questions in school? Why she couldn't sleep? Why she always felt like a Martian? But if she had been so smart herself, why didn't she do well in school?

At first, she dismissed the whole question and pushed the memories away. Then, the awareness slowly came that she would only be able to help her own daughter if she faced the shattering pain of reframing her past. She began to educate herself about giftedness—her own as well as her child's—so that she could learn how to use her potential and advocate for her daughter.

It is easy to see how much courage and education it would take to claim our children's and our own giftedness in the face of so much conditioning, pain, stigma and silence—especially since many gifted people tend to be extremely sensitive. But consider the possible gains.

To borrow from Martin Luther King, Jr., "I have a dream": I have a dream that together, in small groups across the country, we could move from emotional resistance to political education. By networking, we could support each other through the pain, anger and losses of our childhood. We could educate ourselves about giftedness in our children and in ourselves—create a safe environment to talk about being gifted. We could strategize about our children's educational needs and plans. We could help our children find each other.

Networking is about sharing the sources of precious information and expanding upon them. Psychological development of people with high levels of giftedness is not well understood. It is in many ways significantly different from normal development. For instance, you might be likely to have a child with "the terrible ones," instead of "the terrible twos"; abstract thought at two instead of at ages eight to ten; empathy and a sense of social justice at ages two to three, instead of at eight to ten. These developmental differences have many consequences that networks of parents and other gifted adults could help each other understand.

Last, it is my dream that some of the people in these networks might want to begin the work of each acting on a local level to educate the schools and the public about the existence of, the development of, and the needs of this misunderstood population. At high levels of giftedness, these people are as differently-abled as the low end of the IQ spectrum. Therefore, they need to be identified and talked about, not because they are superior, but because they have *special needs*. The lack of understanding about psychological differences of the highly gifted and asynchronous development leaves them to suffer severe traumas. This is a neglected, often unidentified at-risk population who could be so much happier, and contribute so much more to the world, if they were understood, nurtured and allowed to be educated more appropriately. At present, many gifted people hide in little pockets so they won't get hurt or live somebody else's dream. By networking, we can support each other's authenticity and dreams and possibly find the courage to change the societal misconceptions that harm us and our children.

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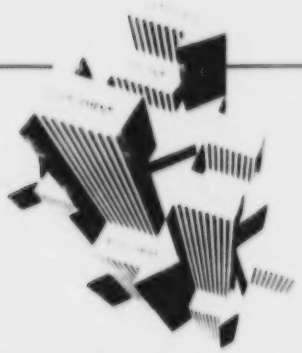
Why?

The world turned into a zoo,
Without a tiger or a kangaroo.
A zoo of people with ills.
A zoo of people who run bulldozers over hills.
A zoo of people who think of themselves.
A zoo of people who don't believe in elves.
A zoo of people, to my dismay,
Are a zoo of people who don't know how to play.
A zoo of people who think life is black and white.
A zoo of people who don't work things out, they fight.
How did we let this happen?
How come we are all just nappin'?
While the trees go away,
And the sky gets gray.
Why, Why, Why, Why, Why?!

Bailey Whiteside (Age 9)



A Response to John Feldhusen's Rejoinder

Richard W. Ronvik, M.S.

Since I have agreed with almost everything John Feldhusen has ever said or written on gifted education, or talent development if he prefers, I read with interest, and some confusion, his "Foundations of Talent: A Rejoinder to R. W. Ronvik," [*Understanding Our Gifted*, 6(2)] which is a response to my original article "Re-examining the Foundations of Giftedness," [*Understanding Our Gifted*, 5(6)].

Let me see if I have this straight. Feldhusen and his students criticize my use of the term "gifted," prefer the term "talent," "talented," or "talented youth," and cite as evidence the fact that in school practice, tests to identify "gifted youth" are sometimes misused and that "gifted education" programs run the gamut from weak to strong, implying presumably that with the term "talented" this could not possibly happen.

They criticize my possible use of intelligence tests or achievement tests, as part of the credible measures I call for in identifying gifted children by saying that these are "quite fallible" and then go on to say that we should match youth "with curriculum and instruction that affords an appropriate challenge, given their level of prior *achievement*" (emphasis mine).

They take me to task for suggesting that enrichment is related to depth and intensity, and go on to eliminate the term "enrichment" by reducing it to "acceleration" and later state that "ultimately there is no acceleration." The terms are vaporizing even as we speak.

Feldhusen and his team find it "incredible" that I have concerns about the definition of "talent." They seem to imply that since Feldhusen, Bloom, and Csikszentmihalyi seem to understand what it means, how could Ronvik even question the term.

Cutts and Moseley (1957), in their book *Teaching the Bright and Gifted*, define "talented" as, "All pupils who show unusual ability along non-academic lines..."(p. 3). Hildreth (1966), in her *Introduction to the Gifted*, refers to "talented" as, "A term most commonly applied to exceptional performance in such non-academic areas as sports, dramatics, dancing, music, arts and crafts, mechanical skills, and social leadership" (p. 33). Owen, Blount, and Moscow (1978), in *Educational Psychology: An Introduction*, state that they believe "talented" refers to "persons of superior skills who do not necessarily show high intelligence" (p. 560). Newland (1976), in *The Gifted in Socio-educational Perspective*, claims that "talented" refers to "those who have demonstrated superior skill and whose promise is not primarily based on a function of their superior conceptualization capacity" (p. 24).

The four different definitions for "talented" that I cited in the original article are all taken from the literature and common usage in the field of gifted education, and each definition would yield a different population of children. My concern is not "incredible" in the least.

In the same way that Feldhusen and his team criticize the term "gifted" because there is an implication that those not selected are "ungifted," we can also say that those not grouped in a talent development program are presumably "untalented." Feldhusen is correct when he says that I see the issue as "simply a matter of terminology."

I think most parents would find it completely irrelevant whether students receiving special services were called *gifted*, or *talented*, or *precocious*, or *academically able* or whether they were called anything at all. What they are extremely frustrated about is the neglect of gifted or talented children through either a total lack of program services, or the notion that a brief resource room pull-out program or a Saturday program will somehow satisfy the needs of gifted and talented students with little or no adjustment to the basic five day per week school program.

What is needed was stated very nicely in the book, *Toward Excellence in Gifted Education*, when John Feldhusen (1985) said, "*The ideal program for the gifted at the elementary level is the full-time or self-contained model, at least for all the basic academic subjects*" (p. 182).

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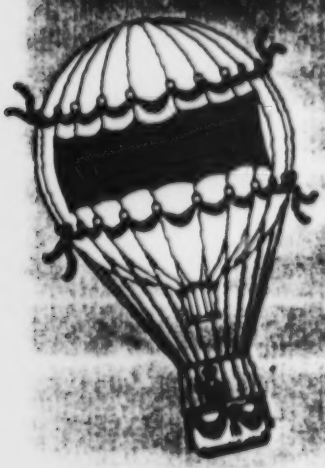
IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY

Fairy Tales, Part II

Let us continue our voyage to the land of enchantment (begun in our last journey) where young people can use the timeless literature of fairy tales as a wellspring for their own creative expression and to explore their own family heritage.



In many fairy tales a beautiful maiden meets a handsome prince and they overcome great obstacles to live happily ever after. Students can interview their grandparents, inquiring how they met, courted, and were married. Students can then weave the details of their romance into an original fairy tale that they illustrate and give to their grandparents as an anniversary gift.

Students can write letters to Santa Claus informing Santa what presents they believe would be most appropriate for such fairy tale characters as the Big, Bad Wolf, Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, Snow White, and Goldilocks and the Three Bears.

Students also love to write fractured fairy tales. Ask students to select a favorite fairy tale and read it carefully, noting the plot, character descriptions, and action sequences. Next, they should brainstorm a complete list of contemporary slang words and expressions used to describe people, places, actions, and feelings. This list serves as a dictionary or thesaurus as each student then rewrites the chosen traditional fairy tale in slang. The resulting products are funny and should definitely be shared orally with peers in small groups.

Students may choose to write limericks or epitaphs for and about fairy tale characters. Here are two examples:

There once was a lady of great fright!
Stepmother of lovely Snow White.
She looked at the mirror,
Which said, "Sorry, my dear."
And she sent the girl off into the night.

Here rest the stepsisters of Cinderella;
They're sad 'cause she got the fella!

Creative thinking exercises are natural extensions of young people's encounters with fairy tale literature. Ask students to imagine that they own a mirror of amazing powers similar to the one Snow White's stepmother possessed. What are ten very important questions they would like the mirror to answer? Suppose the third sibling of the Three Little Pigs did not have a house with a fireplace and chimney. Suppose that instead his house is heated with solar power. How might the Three Little Pigs rid themselves of the pestiferous wolf? Ask students to describe and illustrate their solutions. Imagine that all the fairy godmothers have gone on strike. How will Cinderella go to the ball? Invite students to design a new means of transportation. The woodsman is also off somewhere else and is not around to save Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother. How might Little Red Riding Hood rescue her grandmother and dispose of the Big, Bad Wolf?

On our next voyage we will return to the land of imagination and examine how creative students might become outstanding planners and entrepreneurs and create a new fairy tale shopping mall for children.

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is a President's Teaching Scholar and Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs, and the author of several books, including ***Inventing, Inventions, and Inventors*** and ***Lives of Promise.***

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Kathi Kearney

THE HIGHLY GIFTED

Networking: Essential Tools, Essential Skills

Where do you locate an expert in Cree Indian animal myths? How does a rural school in an isolated island community provide enough math courses for the nine year old who has already completed Algebra I? To whom can a family turn when they have just found out that their seven year old scored above 190 IQ on the Stanford-Binet L-M?

Networking is a critical component in parenting and educating highly gifted children. Often, it is the *only* way the resources necessary for optimal development can be procured. It is almost always necessary to reach beyond the standard resources available in most schools and communities in order to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of these children.

Even resources generally appropriate for gifted children may not be enough; Tolan (1985) notes, "I began going to conferences on giftedness where I noticed an interesting phenomenon. Parents of *exceptionally* gifted children found the least help at conferences" (p. 23). Schools, too, often find their resources (and their policies) taxed to the limit. Both families and schools must approach networking in a systematic manner in order to marshal the resources highly gifted children will need as they grow up. Parents and educators should plan at the outset to record information in a ring binder or on a computer database for future reference. Networking has a "snowball" effect; one contact is likely to yield the names, addresses, and phone numbers of several other potential resources. It is important to keep track of this information in such a way that it can be retrieved easily.

Networking Essentials for Parents

- *Establish connections with other families of highly gifted children.* Although the school may not be able to give you this information because of privacy laws, advocacy groups for the gifted usually know of other parents of highly gifted children who are willing to be contacted. It is absolutely essential for these families to talk with each other.

- *Keep an ongoing list of resources.* Such a record should include the notebook or database described above; records of conversations with staff at your child's school; plus pertinent research, journal articles, books, and useful press clippings.

- *Get to know your local legislators and your U.S. Senators and Representatives.* If you are so inclined, help with their campaigns, and establish contacts in their offices. Their assistance is not limited to favorable votes on gifted education legislation. Politicians can also help you access information and make your way through difficult bureaucratic hurdles. One U.S. Senator's office intervened when a ten year old who otherwise qualified academically was denied federal financial aid for college simply because she lacked a high school diploma and was not old enough to take the GED exam. He introduced a bill in the legislature waiving the compulsory attendance law for full-time college students under the age of 17.

- *Read everything you can find about highly gifted children, and share these readings with your child's school if you think it will help.*

Networking Essentials for Schools

- *Locate and access resources throughout the school district, at all grade levels.* Appropriate educational opportunities should be open to all students, regardless of chronological age.

- *Maintain and use a regional listing of resources for highly gifted students.* Resources include local colleges and universities; information about the national Talent Searches and the Advanced Placement exams; psychologists and counselors with expertise in assessing and counseling highly gifted students; mentors; books, journal articles, and research about this population; advanced academic courses on the Internet; and information available via computer networks.

- *Locate supportive individuals within the school community.* Highly gifted children sometimes experience unwarranted hostility in school from both peers and educators (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1993), especially in the current political climate. It is important to locate everyone within the school community who understands these children and can provide an occasional safe haven. One school secretary in a rural district kept the itinerant gifted education teacher apprised of the day-to-day social progress of a profoundly gifted boy who was adjusting to a grade skip.

- *Provide an opportunity for highly gifted students to spend time together.* These students need time with others who share their speed and complexity of thinking. Hollingworth (1942) observed the problem of play in profoundly gifted children. She noted

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Mary Lynn Baum

from parent to parent

"Networking" and "The Net"

When I started thinking about this column, I didn't set out to write about the Internet. I had planned to focus on the networks we build with other parents and educators, or perhaps on how we can help our children develop their own network of friends and mentors—tangible, person to person contact.

I've always thought that there was no substitute for that kind of direct personal interaction, the kind Stella Barnes of Kelowna, B.C., vividly remembers:

Our son got to know an older neighbour, a stand-in Grandpa, who had lived here all his life and had an endless supply of information about our area. He shared his collection of arrowheads and snakeskins, his expertise in identifying animal tracks, his rowing boat and his time. Sunday mornings with Dick were among the highlights of our son's week.

This kind of special relationship goes beyond the information that Dick was able to share with his young protege. Much of its worth is in the human give and take, the exchange between generations, the time shared and lived together.

All the same, I've recently had the opportunity to observe first-hand the experiences of my son on the Internet, and my views have changed as a result. Whether participating in discussions on topics in his academic field through the sci.math and sci.physics news groups or relaxing with rec.games.trivia or alt.sport.baseball.tor-bluejays, there are no boundaries to the contacts he can make. The electronic network removes tell-tale signs of age. How else could a young physics student and an established cosmologist participate in the same discussion, person to person?

There are no limits to what a gifted youngster can explore, or whom she can explore it with. One can sign on to any news group and (given sufficient time and financial resources) pursue a whole range of interests. Whether a gifted youngster has an all-consuming passion for one field or an eclectic assortment of interests, electronic networks provide access to fellow enthusiasts and intellectual sparring partners. They cut across the barriers of distance and age and make it possible to establish connections that even a few years ago could not have been made.

No, I don't think there's any substitute for the kind of meaningful direct relationship that Stella Barnes writes about. It's still important to develop those networks for ourselves and to help create them for our children. At the same time, for gifted young people, so often isolated by the disparity between their age and their intellectual development, the Net can open doors and windows to a whole range of peers.

Mary Lynn Baum, is past president of the Gifted Children's Association of British Columbia, Canada. Editor since 1983 of its newsletter ***Bright Connections***, and the parent of a highly gifted teenager.

THE HIGHLY GIFTED continued from page 17

that these children

...always wanted to organize the play into a complicated pattern, with some remote and definite climax as the goal... The playmates of ordinary intelligence naturally resented persistent efforts to reform them and to organize them for the attainment of remote goals (p. 274).

The result is that these children have fewer playmates because of their internal developmental asynchrony. Providing opportunities for these children to be together is just as important for their social development as it is for academic challenge.

Networking is not difficult or expensive, but it is an ongoing process. It is far better to have too many resources than too few. Highly gifted children are often isolated from each other and from the resources that would help them, solely because those resources have not been scouted out. In our information age, that tragedy is avoidable.

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Kathi Kearney is founder of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in South Casco, Maine, a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Editor of ***Highly Gifted Children***.

ANTENNA . . . .

Current Developments in Gifted Education

My phone rings, and too often it's the same story. I listen with renewed interest to a parent of a gifted child, telling another sad tale of inappropriate curriculum and unfulfilled potential, and ending with "I wish somebody would do something!"

I, too, wish somebody would do something. But who? Well, folks, there really is somebody who can do something. In fact, there are many somebodies: you and me and all the educators and parents out there who bemoan the lack of education for gifted children.

A popular media commercial demands that we *reach out and touch someone*. If we're going to ensure substantial and continuous education for our brightest students—rather than shaky programs that disappear at the beginning of each school year—we need to reach out and touch each other, our community, businesses, legislators and the general public. We must form a lasting and impenetrable network.

Networking is not a new idea; it's an idea whose time has come. In gifted education we have had advocacy groups for years. However, our message has not been unified or forceful or assertive enough to achieve appropriate and challenging education for all gifted children in every school district.

We could learn a lot about cohesiveness and the ability to bring about lasting change from the special education movement. In the 1970s, parents of handicapped children developed a strong national structure and were effective in their use of the legislative and judicial processes. Their efforts contributed to the passage of several landmark pieces of legislation, including PL 94-142, passed in 1975. This law, mandating a free and appropriate public education for all handicapped children and youth, also includes due-process procedures, least restrictive environments and individualized education programs (Meyen, 1982).

All of this could work equally well for the gifted. How about a federal mandate for the education of gifted students? We're only two decades behind special ed.

Our gifted kids, too, deserve the strongest advocacy we can provide. Reach out and join forces. Let's touch every gifted child in this nation.

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Dorothy Knopper, M.A., is a private consultant for gifted education in Colorado and the publisher of ***Understanding Our Gifted.***

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April 6-9, 1994. This conference is in conjunction with the Rocky Mountain Regional Social Studies Conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Phoenix, AZ. For more information, contact Dr. Nancy Stahl, Gifted Specialist, Arizona Department of Education, 1535 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007. (602) 542-3052.

ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED UNDERACHIEVING STUDENTS (AEGUS)

April 22-23, 1994. This is the 7th annual conference of AEGUS on "Developing Gifts: Celebrating Diversity in Underachieving Gifted Children." University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis, MN Campus. For additional information, contact Diane Poague, AEGUS Conference Coordinator, University of St. Thomas, CHC-131, 2115 Summit Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105. (612) 962-5431.

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May 11, 1994, 3:30-4:30 pm Eastern Daylight Time. This live satellite broadcast from The National Research Center on Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT) features actual lessons with students. Participants will receive accompanying lesson plans. Contact NRC/GT at (203) 486-4676 for more information.

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The first journal on adult giftedness, *Advanced Development* focuses on inner development rather than achievement. Volume 5, "Valuing the Feminine," features the Stone Center's Self-in-Relation Theory. Issues important for both men and women are raised. ($20 for individuals; $30 for institutions.) See the order form on page 7 or contact ISAD, 1452 Marion Street, Denver, CO 80218, (303) 837-8378.

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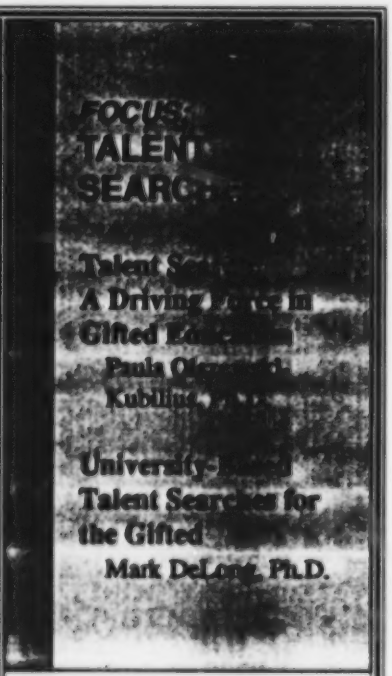

If I have seen a little farther than others, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants.

Sir Isaac Newton

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Talent Search: A Driving Force in Gifted Education

Paula Olszewski-Kubilius, Ph.D.

What is Talent Search?

When one uses the term "talent search" among a group of educators of the gifted it means something very specific. The term refers to an educational program carried out at four universities within the United States. Although the four programs have unique features, all of them conduct the talent search in basically the same way. Seventh and eighth grade students who score at the 95th percentile or above on a standardized achievement test register to take the *Scholastic Aptitude Test* (SAT) or the *American College Testing Program* (ACT). These tests are typically taken by high school students who are preparing to attend college. Historically, the tests were developed to predict college performance and to place students appropriately within the college curriculum. Younger students take them because they provide a better measure of their intellectual abilities than standardized achievement tests designed for their age. Based on students' scores on the SAT or ACT, various kinds of educational options and experiences, ranging from high level enrichment courses to subject and grade acceleration, are recommended. And participants are

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FOCUS ON:
TALENT SEARCHES

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University-Based Talent Searches for the Gifted

Mark R. DeLong, Ph.D.

For about the past 15 years, gifted middle-school students throughout the United States have had opportunities to test their talents and follow their strengths in college-level academic programs offered by "talent search programs." Although colleges have long hosted groups of bright pre-college students in special programs—some offering college credit, it was only in the early 1980s that a handful of universities systematically brought together resources to identify, help to educate, counsel, and study academically talented youngsters. The organizations providing these comprehensive services are generally called "talent search programs" or just "talent searches." They are headquartered at Duke University (Durham, NC), the University of Denver, Northwestern University (Evanston, IL), and The Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, MD). Between these four talent searches, students throughout the entire United States have access to talent identification services, publications, and educational programs. During the past 15 years, about *one million* students have taken part in at least one of the talent search programs.

(Continued on page 11)

FROM THE EDITOR

Happy Spring!

Here in the Rockies it's still snowing, but we continue to believe that Spring is in the air. In this issue, we bring you information about one of the most important advances in the discovery and education of gifted children: our nation's talent searches. Although "Talent Search" usually refers to the regional talent searches conducted at four major private universities, there are now literally dozens of additional talent searches sponsored by colleges and universities all over the United States. The talent searches provide an economical, standardized method for gifted teens and preteens to be identified through out-of-level testing. Many colleges are now offering advanced coursework in the summer and after school for talent search participants. Young people report finding new friends, developing responsibility, taking more challenging courses, and feeling better about themselves as a result of their participation in talent search.

In our lead articles, Paula Olszewski-Kubilius of the Midwestern Talent Search at Northwestern and Mark DeLong of the TIP program at Duke describe basic components of all the regional talent searches. In addition, Michael Leviton tells about his experience in a summer program sponsored by the Center for Talented Youth (CTY) of Johns Hopkins. The fourth regional talent search is sponsored by the University of Denver. All of these institutions share a common philosophy and similar eligibility requirements.

Over 150,000 youths participate in the four regional talent searches every year. That's astonishing! Think of what could happen if each student's family were to make a commitment to help all of our nation's gifted children. In no time, we would have a federal mandate protecting these children's welfare. And if each talent search participant determined in adult life to help the next generation of gifted children, there would be a Renaissance in our lifetime.

A key concept of all the talent searches, originating with Dr. Hal Robinson, is the need for an *optimal match* between a child's learning rate and the level and pacing of instruction. An optimal match is needed for gifted preschoolers as much as it is for gifted teens. Unfortunately, seventh grade is too late for many of our most highly gifted children to be recognized. Unless they are found early in life, they may become so turned off to an unappetizing diet of drill and repetition that they become underachievers—a condition which can last a lifetime. We are thankful for the talent searches, and hope that as they expand to reach elementary age children, they will enhance awareness and inspire educators of young children to provide an optimal match for the unique learning needs of this special population.

Linda Silverman

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Deirdre V. Lovecky

HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

Preventing Underachievement in Gifted Students

Many gifted students are trained for academic underachievement. No one intends this to be so, but it occurs when gifted children are presented with work that is too easy, repetitious and limited in scope. Even the most imaginative child cannot turn a typical phonics paper into a very interesting task. Given many such papers, children soon turn off. Over time, many do little work, and come to believe that school has little to offer in terms of real learning.

Some schools believe they offer gifted children the chance to go beyond the curriculum by initiating self-directed activities that take off from a curricular starting place. For example, if the class is studying whales, gifted children might, on their own, study and prepare a report on another aspect of marine mammal ecology. Unfortunately, many gifted children are not self-initiators; they need to be given specific instructions on what to do and how to do it. Other gifted children have already turned off by the time self-directed activities are offered. They have lost their ability to explore materials on their own, or to advance ahead of others; indeed, many have been previously punished for going ahead of the class. These "good" children will not so much as read ahead in an assigned novel. Given directions to do something on their own, they cannot think how to begin. The task seems overwhelming to them and they opt for easy, familiar work, with no surprises and no challenge. This group has learned not to accept risks. The third group of gifted children still learn on their own, but they do it entirely their own way. These prefer to have no interference in the topics they choose. They will only work on what they want, when they want. A good teacher can turn them on to learning for that year or that class, but there is little carry over to other areas. These students have decided that they will only do exactly what they wish. Thus, school work that is uninteresting to them, difficult or somewhat repetitious will not be attempted.

Children who are not self-initiators, or who have given up the chance to self-direct learning in order to do what is expected and easy, can be difficult to reach. However, it is possible to help such a child by carefully structuring the task to teach neglected skills, by specifying higher level expectations and how to reach them, and by finding some topics that match the child's interests.

It is much more difficult to help children who have decided to only self-initiate work that they wish to do. This sort of child resists adult intervention and can be stubborn about the belief that only what is liked is worth doing. Teaching such a child how to persist on less liked tasks, work hard to learn needed but less preferred skills, deal with obstacles that present themselves in understanding material or how to get through the boring parts of every task without losing interest, is a challenge for teachers and parents alike. In fact, it is important with this type of child to change some of the underlying beliefs about learning. Thus, while children who do not know how to self-initiate need activities that pique their interests so they can experience how rewarding is the satisfaction of learning for its own sake, the child who only self-initiates learning needs to give up some of the control and allow others to participate in the learning process. The overly self-initiating child has guarded learning as a sacred thing and needs to see that others can have important and valid input into the acquisition of skills and knowledge. This is best accomplished through a tutor/mentor who sets goals with the child, but who also critiques work and sets expectations for performance that the child has to stretch to reach.

It would be easier for all gifted children if learning from the start of school encompassed a variety of tasks and levels, allowed self-direction, yet set goals for achievement that challenged the child. It is easier to prevent underachievement than to remedy the patterns once they are set in primary school. Schools have an obligation to help gifted children reach their full potential.

Deirdre V. Lovecky, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Providence, Rhode Island, and a frequent author of articles on giftedness in children and adults.

Annemarie Roeper

PARENTING

Talent Lost

David's mother consulted me because she was concerned about her son's grades. All he wanted to do was read, read, read. He reads adult books as well as *The New York Times*, but in school, he would only write one sentence book reports. Homework was a battle; David wouldn't concentrate on it since it was mostly repetition and drill. Writing was difficult; once it took him six hours to write half a page. When David came to see me, I was immediately impressed by his big, questioning grey eyes.

I usually give the children toys and games to play with, or paper to draw on. Then they are more able to relax and share their thoughts with me. I offered David Legos since I knew he loved them.

"I would rather talk," he said seriously without a smile. I asked him how his mother had explained his visit to me.

He replied, *"She said you would help me do my homework better."* Actually his mother and I had discussed the fact that he was not happy in school. But obviously his problem with homework was weighing heavily on him.

"Before we talk about that, I would like it very much if you could tell me a little about what you like to do and what you are interested in." His face lit up. We sat and talked for almost an hour.

"Last summer I went to a camp where we studied the Middle Ages. We learned all about the knights and their armors; we learned about the clothes they wore, the food they ate. And we acted it all out and painted pictures about them."

"Did you get a chance to go swimming or play games?"

"No, it was a very small camp in someone's house and we were there because we were interested in the Middle Ages. I love swimming, but I didn't miss it. Acting and painting were so much fun."

His mother had told me about the camp and how the usually shy boy gave a wonderful performance as a knight in shining armor. Not only had he made the armor himself, he also participated in making the scenery. His parents discovered that he had talent both in acting and in art. They had learned about a side of him that was totally hidden. Nothing in his school experience allowed such talent to appear.

"Does your teacher know that you like the Middle Ages, acting and painting?"

"No, it's not important. I need to learn to concentrate on my homework."

"Do you dream about the Middle Ages when you are supposed to be doing your homework?"

"Yes, at school, too. I think about all the wars since then and the bombs...." A look of deep concern came over his face again. *"I wish I could stop it."*

"If your teacher would let you do things like you did in camp, would you be spending your time dreaming?"

"Oh, no, I know I would have no trouble. I do well in art and science classes."

"What if she asked you to go to the library and find out more about the knights in the Middle Ages and then write about it? Would you be able to do that homework?"

"I think I could, but my writing is slow."

"Or if you could talk about it at school and act it out?"

"Nobody else would be interested. Besides, I have to read the books the teacher assigns."

"Do you think your trouble with school means that there is something wrong with you because you are not happy and cannot make yourself do your homework?"

"Yes," he said. *"It is my problem. My parents think so too."* His parents had been told by camp counselors that their son had an unusual talent in acting. Yet, because of pressure from the school, they concentrated on the homework which resulted in difficulties for the whole family. In my session with the parents I suggested that the problem was not with David, but with the expectations of the school; he needed an environment which would recognize and include his talents and interests, and even his concerns, in their program.

Many young children have specific talents and interests, but if they go to a school that does not value creativity, by the time they reach third grade they submit to outside expectations and lose their creativity in art, drama, storytelling, dance and other areas. At times these children feel burdened with not being able to live up to others' expectations and being distracted by the inner pressure of creativity. Even outstanding math students lose their excitement about math when they are not allowed to learn math at their own rate, but are focused on their slowness in reading instead.

The first priority for parents should be to support their child's own agenda, interests and abilities. Actually, against that background of support children are more likely to learn missing skills. If we do not support their interests and talents, they may never be realized and the children may feel unfulfilled.

Parents are called upon to be their children's advocates by giving them opportunities to discover their talents —either by finding a school that offers a curriculum which includes opportunities for personal growth in areas other than skills or by influencing the existing school situation to honor their child's talents and interests.

***Note:** I would be glad to answer letters or talk with families in this situation.*

Dr. Annemarie Roeper is a consultant on the gifted in Oakland, California, and author of the book, ***Educating Children for Life.*** Co-founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the ***Roeper Review***, Annemarie has inspired a worldwide focus on global awareness in gifted education.

INSTRUCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Magnet Schools

A magnet school may function as an ongoing talent search by virtue of its unique focus, student body, and curriculum. In this column, I will discuss four ways in which this search may be activated: by interviewing incoming students, offering survey or rotation classes, bringing professionals into the school, and through after-school interest groups or clubs.

The interview process can be set up as follows: prior to the beginning of the school year, incoming or prospective students attend a presentation that highlights the special classes available in the school. Teachers of representative classes explain what is taught in the classes and display examples of student products. Productions of dance, music or drama can be videotaped for ease of presentation. Following the presentation, students are interviewed (briefly) to determine their area(s) of interest and experience or expertise. They indicate at least first and second choice interests.

Survey or rotation classes offer students who have no consuming interest in areas related to the focus of the school an opportunity to discover new interests and develop previously unknown talents. Through exposure to and instruction in a topic, students may become "turned on" to the vistas opened for them. One shining example of this process is a male Hispanic youth who, on entering middle school had no knowledge of, or exposure to, dance. Through a rotation class, he discovered a talent that led to a scholarship at a top school of dance. Now in his third year at this school, he expresses his love for dance and excitement at the promising career ahead of him. Were it not for a fine arts rotation class, he might never have found this fulfillment, and the world could not enjoy the beauty of his dancing.

A magnet school not only attracts students, it also seems to draw community members with expertise or consuming interest in the areas of focus. Engineers gravitate to math/technology magnets, professors and other scientists to science magnets, and artists of every description to a fine arts magnet. Many times these people volunteer their services without being asked, and seem to be more than willing to participate in the educational process when asked. Students who believe that teachers do not know much about the "real world" give credence to "real" professionals. Through such credence, interest may be sparked and talent discovered; a guest speaker may serve as a talent scout.

After-school clubs or interest groups naturally spring from the interests and strengths of the school staff. At a magnet school, these clubs may serve as one more way to discover talent. A model club is less threatening than a class in design, a choral club less than a class in voice. Within a relatively small group and without a concern for evaluation and grades, students may discover strengths they never dreamed they possessed. A club can serve as a sheltered environment for the discovery of interests and talents. The leader of such a group has a rare opportunity to observe and nurture budding genius when it manifests itself.

Magnet schools make delightful and valuable contributions to the educational milieu of a community. In addition to broadening educational horizons and offering depth of study, they can serve as one more way in which a community may discover the varied talents of its youth.

Shirley W. Schiever, Ph.D., is a curriculum specialist at the Fine Arts Magnet School in Tucson, Arizona, and the author of ***A Comprehensive Approach to Teaching Thinking***.

Stephanie S. Tolan

THE READING ROOM

Many young readers choose books by genre, by subject matter, by the look of the book jacket or the story summary on the jacket flap. Though they may be able to tell you the title of their favorite book(s), they may not know the author's name. It is important to remind children that an important way to choose books is by author. Some books are part of a series, like the *Bagthorpe Saga* by Helen Cresswell, or the *Anastasia books* by Lois Lowry, and others, like some of Madeleine L'Engle's and Cynthia Voigt's, have minor characters from one novel as major characters in another. But even when an author writes unrelated and extremely varied works, readers who enjoy one book are highly likely to enjoy the others.

Among the somewhat lesser-known writers whose work, because of its depth and complexity, is especially appealing to gifted children are Peter Dickinson, Margaret Mahy, William Sleator, and Zibby O'Neal, who have been represented in earlier Reading Room discussions. Today we focus on Margaret Mahy, a prolific and highly regarded New Zealand writer, whose works for middle grade readers and young adults offer intellectual challenge, lush style and quite often an unusual and intriguing blend of realism and fantasy.

Dangerous Spaces, Viking, 1991, involves two cousins, Anthea and Flora, of very different temperament and background, thrown together by the sudden death of Anthea's parents. The narrative moves back and forth between the quirky daylight world of Flora's family, and the strangely compelling world of Anthea's story-like dreams. There is a ghost; more precisely there are two ghosts, one who inhabits the dream world and so is known to Anthea, and the other who inhabits the real house, and is known (at least perceived) by Flora. In the end, the two worlds and the two girls and the two ghosts must come together if Anthea's life is to be saved. A compelling and unusual story.

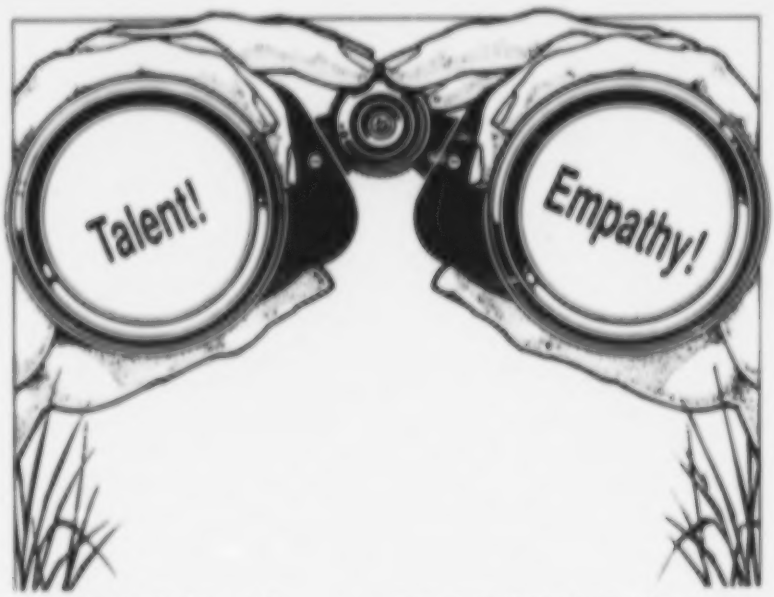
Underrunners, Viking, 1992, is the story of Tristram, an intensely imaginative boy who lives on a wild and desolate New Zealand peninsula with his creative but irresponsible father (his mother has run away to Australia and taken their car) and Winola, an equally imaginative girl living temporarily in the Children's Home nearby. The book begins as a sort of light, imaginative romp as the two meet and share pretend adventures with Selsey Firebone (the intergalactic detective Tristram imagines inhabiting his body) against the Veng (acid-spitting aliens) and other villains from the B.I.C. (Bureau of Intergalactic Cruelty). They hide out and explore in the "underrunners," natural caves and tunnels beneath the tall, late summer grasses. Little by little the reader realizes that Winola's history (her mother has several times tried to commit suicide) is dark indeed, and that the man she believes is after her is both real and genuinely dangerous. The story is funny and suspenseful, light and dark, as the children must shed their make-believe perils and make-believe powers and fend for themselves with all the internal tools they can muster.

Like all of Mahy's work, these two novels are full of extraordinary, tough, vibrant characters. For American readers the New Zealand setting adds a further exotic touch. And the stories, whatever the elements of fantasy or adventure, center on fundamental human issues about caring, belonging, and developing an identity. In addition to her middle grade and young adult fiction, Mahy has written many delightful, funny and intensely original picture books, so children can begin with her work at the very start of their literary experience and make a friend for life.

Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, ***Guiding the Gifted Child.***

KALEIDOSCOPE

What is it We're Searching for, Anyway?



The month of May is usually a very busy one for me. It is the month that I am popular on the "6th grade circuit," speaking to hundreds of children who have recently taken the SAT as a part of one of our country's "talent search" programs. These freshly-scrubbed kids (and their equally-clean parents) sit in an auditorium where they are being recognized for their fluent abilities in mathematical or verbal skills. They range in age from 10-13 (the kids, not the parents!) and, as I wait to be introduced as the guest speaker, I sit in awe at the accomplishments of these boys and girls, many of whom scored better on the SAT at age 12 than I did at 17, and *definitely* higher than I would score now at 40. They are the academic cream of the crop of their generation, proof positive that intelligence is as varied among children as are shoe size, hair color and personality types.

As I move toward the podium, the applause I receive is less in recognition of my academic credentials than it is for the fact that I once appeared with Oprah Winfrey on TV. That's OK. Kids, like adults, often acknowledge that which is most familiar to them. My talk begins with a cartoon about a kid doing so well in school that even the teachers don't know how to help—a situation that is far more humorous on the funny pages than it is in real life. I move quickly into a reminder that gifted students don't always have to get straight A's—"less than perfection is more than acceptable"—and then tell them that it is common for gifted kids to have friends who are chronologically younger or older than they. I make each of these points with a combination of bad jokes, solid research and personal example, hoping beyond hope to keep the attention of my audience, who range in age from 6-year-old siblings to 70-year-old grandmas.

Throughout my talk, I find myself telling these extremely capable children a lot of "OK" things: *"It's OK to act silly"; "It's OK to know (or to not know) what you want to be when you grow up"; "It's OK to ask deep questions that have no firm answers"; "It's OK to be you, whoever that happens to be."*

My 45 minutes evaporate quickly and I finish my talk with a reminder to parents that the greatest gift they can give their kids is the gift of their own time; too, I remind the students to be patient with their moms and dads—after all, they're still learning how to be parents.

Applause, applause. I retake my seat. If I'm lucky, some people will come up and talk to me privately. If I'm real lucky, it'll be some kids.

I return to my hotel or the airport, and it's usually in those transient places that I recognize anew that the most important talents these children possess are not—indeed, **cannot** be—measured by the SAT or any other test. Though important, all these high scores tell me is that the kids are quick, sharp and academically capable; but a 720 SAT math tells me little about the nature or depth of their true talents, such as how much they care about each other, how much they like and respect themselves, and in what ways they want their lives to matter, now and in the minutes, months and years that lie ahead.

Perhaps in some future year, some yet-to-be-seen month of May, I'll be asked to talk to a group of freshly-scrubbed kids and parents in celebration of a talent search devoted to empathy or human relations or how enthusiastically kids have tried to make their world a better place to live. If this were to happen, I'll see it as the most significant speech I ever gave. In fact, I think I'll even invite Oprah Winfrey.

Jim Delisle, Ph.D., teaches at Kent State University and is the author of five books including ***Guiding the Social and Emotional Development of Gifted Youth*** (Longman, 1992).

eligible for many programs designed especially for them. All of this occurs for over 150,000 students annually, ages 13 or 14 years old.

How Talent Search Began. The talent search grew out of Dr. Julian Stanley's search for a test to measure the mathematical reasoning abilities of exceptional children. He discovered the value of the SAT for this purpose. In 1972, Dr. Stanley and his colleagues at The Johns Hopkins University began administering the SAT to groups of students from broader geographic areas around Baltimore. Eventually, this process became systematized into the talent search. Dr. Stanley founded the Study of Mathematically Precocious Youth (SMPY) to continue his research of bright children. The Center for Talented Youth (CTY) was created at Johns Hopkins University to conduct the talent search (in both verbal and mathematics domains) in the northeastern and eventually the southwestern regions of the country. Other sites replicated the basic operations developed by Stanley and CTY and began talent searches in other regions of the U.S.: Duke University serves the south and southeast, Northwestern University serves the midwest and the University of Denver serves the northwest. [See map on Page 13.]

How is Talent Search Unique? The talent searches are different from most programs available to gifted children. First of all, they are conducted by universities rather than local schools. Talent searches are an "extra-educational" type of gifted program. Schools may notify children about the talent search, but parents and students typically make the decision about whether to participate. Yet, the results of the testing have important implications for the educational programs children should have in school.

Second, the talent searches deliver services to gifted children and their families on a regional basis. This means that the special characteristics of certain areas of the country can be incorporated into service delivery procedures. Also, educational programs that are within a reasonable geographic distance from children's schools and communities can be made available to them.

Benefits of Talent Search

Cost Effective and Efficient. Talent searches are cost effective and efficient ways of identifying children in need of special educational programs. For a total cost of under $50, students and parents receive information about their children's abilities that can be used to plan their entire school program from seventh through twelfth grade. Scores on the SAT or ACT can alert parents and educators to the need for early access to advanced courses, early entrance to high school and even college. Through the talent searches, students are readily notified about hundreds of summer and other extra-educational programs for which they may qualify. Because the testing occurs in groups, many more children can be accommodated than is possible with individual IQ testing. The cost is far less than that associated with private evaluations conducted by a licensed psychologist.

Based on Sound Educational Principles and Practices. The talent searches embody excellent and easy methods of identification and assessment. They utilize the practice of out-of-level testing, using a test designed for older children since the tests typically employed with younger children do not provide accurate assessments of their abilities. Most standardized achievement tests are designed to be given in relatively short periods of time to groups of students who vary greatly in their aptitude. As a result, most do not contain enough difficult test items to assess the abilities of bright children. On grade level achievement tests, most gifted students score extremely well. But even among these students there are different levels of ability. Tests written for older students do a better job of accurately measuring bright children's reasoning abilities. If a music teacher has a new student who already has some musical skill, the teacher may have the student play several pieces of increasing difficulty in order to gauge the student's capabilities and determine where to begin instruction. It is the same procedure with talent search testing. Students have already taken a test designed for their age group and performed almost perfectly. The SAT or ACT is the "more difficult piece" that will give a better picture of their reasoning abilities and subsequent instructional needs.

Consistent with Children's Development. With age, there is increasing differentiation of intellectual abilities, particularly during adolescence. Measures of global intelligence are more appropriate for younger children whose cognitive abilities are more highly inter-correlated. An older child's relative standing in one ability may bear little relationship to his or her standing in another ability. At adolescence, "generalized abilities are channeled into specific domains, and aptitude tests are considered better indicators of ability than intelligence tests" (Silverman, 1986, p. 139). The SAT, which involves two areas, and the ACT which involves four areas, help to ascertain students' abilities in important areas of academic aptitude.

Guides Educational Planning. The results of talent search testing tell educators and parents the specific academic areas in which students demonstrate aptitude (e.g., verbal, mathematical) and help them decide what kinds of courses and programs to pursue. Talent search is not an activity designed to separate the gifted from the nongifted. Its purpose is to provide

a more accurate assessment of the abilities of students who, by virtue of their scores on grade level achievement tests, are already considered gifted and talented. Thus, educational programming of a special kind is required for all students who participate—for those who score at the low end as well as the high end of the test. Recommendations for students scoring at different levels range from primarily enrichment to accelerative in nature and from mild acceleration (i.e., taking classes one or two years early) to more extreme forms of acceleration (i.e., markedly early entrance to college). Higher scores indicate that students can learn a subject more quickly and within a more compressed time frame. The value of talent search becomes clear if one considers what would happen to students without it. Students who score the same on grade level achievement tests, say at the 99th percentile, might have very different SAT scores. One student may score 350 on the SAT-Mathematics section while the other may score 650. Without the out-of-level testing, these students would be treated the same by their school district when in reality they require very different kinds of educational programs. One student needs enrichment classes in math and early access to algebra. The other student needs access to the entire precalculus curriculum, compression of four years of math into two years or less, and early access to college mathematics courses.

Higher scores indicate that students can learn a subject more quickly and within a more compressed time frame.

Promotes Programs. The talent search has led to a flowering of educational program models and opportunities designed to serve participants. These have taken many different forms: fast paced summer classes and Saturday programs, early access to Advanced Placement courses, enrollment of junior high students in high school courses, dual enrollment of high school students in college classes, correspondence courses for high school and college level courses, and early entrance programs for college. Each of the universities that conduct a talent search produces a compendium of educational programs within its region, and the number of programs grows annually.

Research Supports Talent Search

There is a great deal of research to support the practices underlying the talent search. Below is a sampling of research findings.

1. The two-tiered identification process involved in talent search is valid. It demonstrates that grade level achievement tests cannot discern levels of talent among high achieving students and that a cut-off at the 95th percentile on grade level achievement tests is both efficient and effective to choose students for further assessment. Using this percentile does not eliminate great numbers of students who could score well on the SAT nor does it subject many students to testing who then perform poorly on the test (Ebmeier & Schmulbach, 1989).

2. While the SAT was not initially designed for younger students, the test is not too difficult for them. The percentages of talent search students and high school students who score at the low end of the test (i.e., below 300 on SAT-M or SAT-V) are essentially the same, indicating that the younger students are not more likely to do poorly on the test (Wilder & Casserly, 1988). Most talent search students score above chance level on the test—i.e., higher than scores one would obtain from guessing, suggesting that most students are not overwhelmed by the test (Burton, 1988).

3. The talent search is successful in identifying students who demonstrate advanced academic abilities and achievement compared to other students. When they take the SAT in high school, these students continue to surpass other college bound seniors. They are more likely to take high school honors classes and Advanced Placement courses, particularly in the areas of mathematics and science; to accelerate in high school; to earn honors and awards; and yet to maintain active participation in extra-curricular activities. Their educational aspirations are extremely high (Burton, 1988).

4. Scores on the SAT in junior high are predictive of achievement ten years later and differences in SAT scores among talent search participants relate to differences in eventual academic achievement (Benbow, 1992).

5. Students who participate in accelerated classes subsequent to talent search are successful. They can learn material typically taught to older students at a faster pace, more appropriately matched to their learning rate, and learn it as well as students in more traditionally paced courses (VanTassel-Baska, 1986).

Talent Search Affects General Education

Talent search has had many positive effects on general education. The sheer number of students participating annually in talent search and in special summer and other kinds of academic programs has brought attention to the needs of these learners. It is difficult for schools to

ignore a seventh or eighth grader who scores better than the average high school student on the SAT. The talent search has often galvanized parents to join together to lobby for better services for gifted children at their local schools.

In addition, the talent search has been the impetus for colleges and universities across the country to offer special programs for students. All of the regional talent searches are based at universities and conduct programs for pre-college students. These have been replicated at many other institutions and a host of different types of programs have been developed.

In an effort to serve talent search participants, many collaborations have formed between universities and school districts. For example, the Chicago Public Schools utilizes area universities to offer fast-paced classes for students identified by the SAT. Collaboration between the Ingham County schools in Michigan and Michigan State University (MSU), in the development of four programs for talent search participants, led to the establishment of an Office of Gifted and Talented Programs at MSU. And a collaborative arrangement among school districts in Kalamazoo, Michigan, allowed students to attend an accelerated math program at Kalamazoo College. The program has been replicated at three other colleges in Michigan.

Talent search has brought important issues to the attention of educators, issues that have ramifications for all learners, not just academically talented ones. For example, because talent search participants now regularly take courses at universities and colleges, the issue of credit for those courses has become important. Some states, e.g., Indiana, have passed legislation that allows students to receive high school credit for coursework completed outside of their local school. Thus, all students have additional opportunities and additional incentives to partake of them.

Talent search has helped to reform and set standards for curricula in local schools and districts. Because so many students are taking algebra or literature in the seventh or eighth grade, schools have been forced to review the curriculum and "up-grade" it for grades one through six. Similarly, as more and more students take advanced courses early, high schools have had to offer additional choices or make arrangements for students to take college classes in their last years of high school.

It is difficult for schools to ignore a seventh or eighth grader who scores better than the average high school student on the SAT.

Talent search has also provided a large group of academically talented students to study. Significant research efforts exist at all of the institutions that conduct regional talent searches. Major longitudinal studies of the achievements of various subgroups of talent search participants have been undertaken by SMPY. These studies have provided a great deal of information about these individuals' development and have alerted the broader community of scholars to the capabilities and needs of talented children.

The Future of Talent Search

Talent search programs face certain challenges in the near future. Currently, many educators believe that standardized tests are inadequate measures of achievement because there appears to be a disparity between what these tests measure and what is required for competent functioning in the real world. Assessments of achievement should mirror the activities and standards of professionals in the real world (Wiggins, 1989). In response to this and financial pressures, some school districts are abandoning the use of standardized achievement tests or using them only at certain grades. This may make entry into the talent search more difficult and challenges talent search programs to develop alternative means of finding qualified participants.

Talent search programs have moved gifted education forward in many significant ways. A web of services and programs for students has been built upon the talent search base. And talent searches have been a stable force in education for over a decade. It is doubtful whether we will see such a simple yet elegant embodiment of good educational practice influence so many students and aspects of education again.

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The Name "Talent Search"

In a sense the tag *talent search* is a bit of a misrepresentation, since none of the four regional talent search organizations has the history or uses the method of, say, the Westinghouse Science Talent Search, which has operated for decades and uses a system of graded competitions. The term is also applied to projects centered at major land-grant universities, like Arizona State University, Iowa State University, the University of Iowa, and California State University, Sacramento. Although there are significant overlaps in method and philosophy between these projects and the regional talent searches, the four regional talent searches at Duke, Northwestern, Denver, and Johns Hopkins are distinguished by history, by scope of programs, and by their confederated efforts in identification and educational programming.

In a sense the term *talent search* refers to a single aspect of each of the regional organizations: the major "identification" activity, or the middle-school talent search.

"Out-Of-Level" Testing

Following the lead of work done in the mid-1970s by Dr. Julian Stanley of The Johns Hopkins University, the four regional talent searches systematically find middle-school students who score exceptionally well on nationally normed standardized tests and then offer these students the opportunity to take either the American College Testing Program's ACT or the *Scholastic Assessment Test* (SAT-1), which is a revised and renamed version of the *Scholastic Aptitude Test* (SAT). According to the designers of the test, the SAT-1 measures the same thing as the "old" unnumbered SAT. The talent search students will first take the new SAT-1 in 1994-1995.

Of course, these tests were designed for students planning to enter college, and typically high school juniors and seniors take the SAT-1 and/or the ACT. In effect, the talent search organizations ask students of exceptional ability to take the tests about five years before they would "normally" take them, because the tests are appropriate for the young students by intellectual ability, though not by age. Because of the age disparity between the high school students for whom the tests were designed and the age of the middle school students who take the tests in the talent search, the SAT-1 and ACT are called "out-of-level" tests for the talent search students.

During the past 15 years, about one million students have taken part in at least one of the talent search programs.

Even though talent search students take the SAT-1 or ACT five years before most of the other test-takers, they nevertheless do quite well. As a matter of fact, a good number of the talent search students actually *outscore* the older students for whom the tests are age-appropriate. Overall, between one-quarter and one-third of the students in the Duke University TIP Talent Search score as well or better than the average college-bound senior —and they do this when they have not yet completed the seventh grade. Results are similar in the talent searches run by Northwestern's Center for Talent Development (CTD), the University of Denver's Rocky Mountain Talent Search (RMTS), and The Johns Hopkins University's Center for Talented Youth (CTY).

The regional talent search system has several advantages, not the least of which is its straightforward operation. Students meeting the talent search eligibility criteria simply apply to the talent search organization and subsequently register with the testing agency. (Paula Olszewski-Kubilius' article in this issue of *Understanding Our Gifted* provides more detailed information on eligibility criteria for the talent searches and on the research basis for the programs.) Both the ACT and the SAT-1 have well established testing centers throughout the nation, making travel to a test site quite easy. Moreover, their Saturday testing dates do not interrupt school schedules. Both of the tests are fairly well known, a fact which allows school personnel to make quick sense of test results. And, since the regional talent searches have been operating for nearly 15 years, the testing agencies and the talent search programs have streamlined their processes so that students and their parents promptly receive test results and other materials. A seventh grader registering with a talent search program in the fall can test in December, January or February, get an individual score report from the testing agency about six weeks after testing, and have interpretative information in April—in time for planning the following academic year's coursework. If that student scores well enough, she might choose to attend an intensive summer program in June.

Educational Programs

Each of the regional talent searches runs summer programs for students who have been through the talent search process. In the main, these programs are geared toward students achieving at high levels on the ACT or SAT (or, soon, the SAT-1), though each of the talent search programs makes educational experiences available to all students participating in the searches.

Intensive summer residential programs take place on several college campuses throughout the nation. The Johns Hopkins University's CTY offers programs at sites in California, New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. Duke University TIP runs programs in North Carolina, Virginia, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas—some of which are specialized scientific field research programs. Northwestern University's CTD offers a comprehensive set of five programs for talented students beginning in the sixth grade and extending to the post-graduation year. The University of Denver's RMTS offers a two-week program for rising sixth to eighth graders and a three-week program for rising ninth through eleventh graders. Duke's TIP and Johns Hopkins' CTY each have programs overseas, with TIP's programs taking place in six countries on two continents.

The summer residential programs share certain characteristics. All of them provide talented students with opportunities for academic acceleration, especially in mathematics. All of them use SAT or ACT scores to determine eligibility; students are eligible if they have achieved, in seventh grade, scores roughly corresponding to average scores for college-bound seniors. Duke's TIP has higher eligibility scores than the other talent search programs, however. All of the programs offer a broad range of courses, and they tend to model their offerings after liberal arts curriculum. These are *not* just programs for students interested in science and mathematics, though parents often misconstrue the programs as only for youngsters with high math ability.

Elementary School Projects

The talent searches have recently begun offering services to students in elementary schools. In 1994, all of the regional talent searches offered talent identification services throughout their respective talent search regions. [See map on p. 13.] Like the middle-school talent searches, the elementary school process has eligibility criteria based on grade level and achievement or intelligence test scores. TIP's Motivation for Academic Performance (MAP) Program does not require testing for students to participate fully, though follow up testing is offered as an optional service to the students and their families. TIP's efforts in the MAP program focus on providing information and guidance to gifted students and their families, and MAP has been designed with direct, locally based services in mind. For the other talent search organizations, a follow up test is mandatory, and participation in a commuter or residential educational program is an option.

CTY has run educational programs for talented elementary school students for seven years, but has only recently begun programming residential programs for this age group. The other regional talent searches are building similar services for elementary school students.

Presuppositions and Commitments

Although I can write most authoritatively about TIP's perspective in particular, the talent searches have crafted programs and services around certain suppositions about academic talent. The basic suppositions are:

1. Academically talented children have special needs that should be met. The sooner needs are met the better for the development of the child.

2. Normed standardized tests serve a useful purpose in the identification of highly talented individuals, even though such instruments cannot claim to identify talented individuals exhaustively.

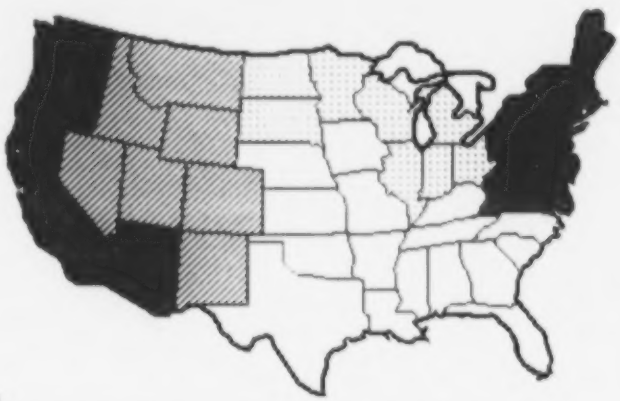
3. Programs and services for highly talented individuals have a better chance of being successful when they build on strengths in the individual and, organizationally, on the strengths of institutions. This principle especially applies to TIP's academic programs, but it also animates the advice we at TIP give to students. So, in the case of college selection, TIP advises students to look at their distinct preferences and abilities first and then seek an "optimal match" in a college.

4. The acceleration model for academic programs is useful and is often the *preferable* model to use in programs for academically talented students, especially in fields of study with well-defined curricula such as mathematics. The emphasis of precollegiate academic programs should be on mastery of knowledge and on building the foundation for high-level study.

5. The talent search programs perform a service to more of the population than just the highly talented, for by improving the understanding of talent, they play a role in developing talent generally.

Some of these points are controversial, as advocates for gifted children know. Gifted education in the broad sense is under attack either because it is deemed "elitist" or because it simply falls victim to education budget cuts. Some see the notion that gifted children have special *needs* as provocative in itself. Indeed, opponents of gifted education have argued against services for the gifted because such services are interpreted as special *privileges* for a few.

Talent Search Regions



Center for Talent Development (Northwestern University)

Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth (The Johns Hopkins University)

Rocky Mountain Talent Search (University of Denver)

Duke University Talent Identification Program

1994 Educational Opportunity Guide: A Directory of Programs for the Gifted, p. 242. Durham, NC: Duke University Talent Identification Program.

In several states, standardized testing has been modified, and in a few states support for norm-referenced tests has been withdrawn or severely curtailed. In some cases, this is a matter of budget belt-tightening. In other cases, support for standardized testing has waned because of a perception that the tests do not measure "real world" skills and abilities. Beyond this, some states (most notably Kentucky) have refocused their testing programs to serve systemic school reform efforts rather than provide information for individual student assessment.

Criterion-referenced tests have become more popular in some states. But because criterion-referenced tests are designed to determine competence using criteria established independent of anyone's performance on the test itself, criterion-referenced tests do not differentiate students by their abilities relative to each other (as norm-referenced tests do). Criterion-referenced tests can show whether a student has competence in broadly defined skills, but the tests do not rank a student's performance relative to other students' performances on the test. Thus, criterion-referenced tests do not serve very well as a means of identifying students of exceptional ability.

Points three and four—building on strengths and academic acceleration—interrelate. The regional talent searches encourage students to accelerate through precalculus mathematics, for example, if they have a particularly exceptional talent in math. And, in fact, it is the expectation at TIP's summer residential programs that exceptionally gifted students master one precalculus math course over a three-week program. Students accelerate so that they can study more challenging and higher-level topics in their areas of strength.

The talent searches are committed to research, partially because of the fact that they are all housed at universities. TIP's own research and much of that in the field does not lead us to believe that talent development is solely a matter of heredity but is instead greatly influenced by environment. Because TIP believes this, TIP seeks to enrich the environments of talented children through broad distribution of information. Although TIP's programs center on developing talent in children, one of the most important parts of TIP's work is providing information to families, to teachers, and to communities so that each can play a role in developing talent and in helping talents become expressed. We at TIP see an obligation to identify and develop talent among groups that have been neglected—especially among females and under-represented minority groups. Research into the phenomenon of giftedness, we believe, can lead us to practices that actually make expression of talent more likely.

Why University-Based?

Characteristics of the home institutions of the talent search programs certainly shape the organizations. It is no accident that the four regional talent searches are located at private institutions which picture themselves as serving at least regional constituencies.

TIP is a case in point. Based at Duke University, which pictures itself as having a national, if not international, constituency, TIP aims to serve *regions*, though its programs are significant at the state and local levels as well. Since it is not part of a single state or local education agency, TIP has freedoms that are not available to

other educational agencies and can at times perform an integrative function for those agencies. The talent searches are designed to be readily available to students across a multi-state search region, and the consequences of participation in the talent searches are similar from state to state and from talent search region to talent search region.

The fact of calling a university home means paying special attention to research and evaluation for the sake of discovering new knowledge. As such, research conducted by the talent search organizations is also required to benefit scholarly communities at universities, although this research certainly benefits students by serving as a basis for improving programs. Also, as a university-based program for precollege students, the talent search programs serve as bridges between secondary and post-secondary institutions.

Animated by commitments to service and research, the regional talent searches have roles to play in informing policy makers about educational issues of gifted students and in providing services directly to gifted students and their families. This breadth of activity makes the regional talent searches increasingly important resources for our nation and for every family with gifted children.

Somewhere, Somehow, Someday

Somewhere there is a wilderness
Where nothing is tame
It is a struggle for survival here
It has only been seen by the native Indians
And perhaps a few men who wandered off course
They may have seen it just before the last flame
Of life was blown out

Somehow this place has been forgotten
We have moved over it with our massive developments
And factories... Oh yes, big factories
And out of each large tower there is smoke that rises
And each little bit is hurting us
Not anybody in particular but every plant and animal
We all live together on this earth so we must think

Someday the last tree in this place will be cut...Unless
We have hope and work together

Robert F. Theobald, Age 10

Contact Addresses:

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Box 90747
Durham, North Carolina 27708-0747
919/684-3847
FAX: 919/681-7921

Center for Talent Development (CTD)
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617 Dartmouth Place
Evanston, Illinois 60208
708/491-3782

Center for Talented Youth (CTY)
The Johns Hopkins University
3400 North Charles Street
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410/516-0337

Rocky Mountain Talent Search (RMTS)
University of Denver
Wesley Hall
2135 East Wesley
Denver, Colorado 80208
303/871-2533

Mark R. Deiong, Ph.D., is Director of Operations at Duke University TIP and co-author of ***What's a Parent To Do?*** and ***Options for Parents of Bright Teenagers.***

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Kathi Kearney

THE HIGHLY GIFTED

Talent Searches and the Highly Gifted

The national talent searches are an essential resource for highly gifted students. Initiated by The Johns Hopkins University more than two decades ago and now administered by several centers nationwide, the talent searches constitute the largest research database in the world about highly gifted adolescents. For many students, the test used in the 7th grade Talent Search, the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT-1), is their first opportunity *ever* to be assessed on a test with a ceiling high enough to measure their abilities. Furthermore, many of the sponsoring universities offer intense, academically rigorous, fast-paced residential summer courses for qualifying students, providing many highly gifted adolescents their first social and academic experiences with others as bright or brighter than they are.

The talent searches are an unqualified success. Yet many gifted young adolescents don't participate, especially those from working-class and lower-middle-class families. These families are not poor enough to qualify for a fee waiver, but not always wealthy enough to part with the $41 registration and SAT fees*, either—especially when the choice may be to pay for one child to take a test, or use the money to buy school shoes at a discount store for other children in the family. Another major reason for nonparticipation among students of all socioeconomic levels is that they simply don't know about the talent searches. Talent search materials are generally mailed to schools. If the school doesn't have a gifted program, doesn't believe in acceleration, or doesn't offer students access to information about private educational opportunities, qualified students may never know that the talent searches exist.

Fortunately, there are many things that schools, families, communities, and the talent searches themselves can do to assure greater participation—thus ensuring that more highly gifted students will be identified and served.

What Schools Can Do

1. Obtain and distribute information and applications for the talent search serving students in your area (see page 14 in this issue for addresses).

2. Administer a sample SAT to qualified students. Multiple copies of this sample test are available free to every high school guidance office. This will allow you to identify and encourage students who are likely to score well on the SAT, but are less likely to participate in the talent search without direct intervention.

What Families Can Do

1. Check your child's school records to see if he or she qualifies to participate in the talent search. Most require achievement test scores in *either* math *or* reading, *or* a composite score at the 97th, 98th, or 99th percentile on the most recent or *next-most-recent* achievement test.

2. Obtain information about the talent search yourself (see page 14 for addresses).

3. Administer the sample SAT test at home, under standard test conditions.

4. Don't miss talent search or SAT registration deadlines.

5. When appropriate, share SAT results with your child's school.

What Community Organizations Can Do

1. Provide funds for talent search entrance fees and scholarships for summer programs.

2. Publicize talent search information in community publications.

What the Talent Searches Can Do

1. Understand the economic realities of lower-middle-class and working-class families. These students don't qualify for fee waivers, but the cost of participating in the talent search is often a real burden. The talent searches need to make greater efforts to reach out to these families and to show them the long-term value of participation.

2. Issue more press releases nationwide, so families whose schools choose not to participate can contact the talent searches directly.

3. Increase financial aid for summer programs, or help establish more community partnerships dedicated to doing this.

Many barriers to talent search participation disproportionately affect working-class and lower-middle-class youth, those from isolated rural areas, and students whose schools have eliminated gifted programs for economic and political reasons. These are the students who often need the talent searches the most. It is incumbent upon all of us to make this information available to them.

*Combined 1993 fee for SAT and Talent Search registration through the Center for the Advancement of Academically Talented Youth (CTY), The Johns Hopkins University. Fees at other centers may vary.

Kathi Kearney is founder of the Hollingworth Center for Highly Gifted Children in South Casco, Maine, a doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University, and Editor of *Highly Gifted Children*.

Mary Lynn Baum

from parent to parent

Kathleen Rogers first became involved in talent search programs in the early 1980s, when her son participated in two major talent searches and their summer programs. Since that time she has followed their development with particular interest as both a parent and an educator.

Kathleen attests to the value of the talent searches, and especially their summer programs: *The most obvious benefit is the opportunity to study challenging material with true academic peers and the subsequent academic guidance in the student's home school*, she writes. *The opportunity not only to take such courses in their major talent area but to balance these with courses in other areas is also very important.*

The emphasis shouldn't be solely on these academic aspects, however. *Also important*, she writes, *are the maturing of life away from home (doing one's own laundry!) and interaction with others in the dorm. A strong element is the important and deep friendships made in the summer programs. This is especially true of students returning for a second, third, or fourth year. Students find a place where their humor, interest, "gifted personalities" are at home, in a way not often available in their home towns.*

Kathleen feels that the most important changes that have taken place over time have been in the awareness of "the whole child" and the complexities arising from their asynchronous development. *Early on, the programs did not always seem to remember that the students were children. Granted that their main purpose was providing accelerated and appropriate academic experiences, there sometimes could have been sensitivity to developmental issues and individual differences in style and personality. There was some expectation that the same pacing, teacher style, and courses were appropriate for all students of a given aptitude score.*

There was also sometimes a lack of recognition that exceptional ability in a domain doesn't necessarily mean that will be the individual's area of choice or the area of greatest strength in the long run. For example, our son, who early on scored very high in math, later scored even higher in verbal and is now a graduate student with a prestigious fellowship in the humanities.

Kathleen notes, however, that over time sensitivity to these issues has grown. *I'm glad to see that programs have become more nurturing and more aware of the overall psychological development of individual students, and that most, if not all, now include a counseling component as a matter of course.*

As the programs continue to evolve, Kathleen has some hopes for future directions. She would like to see even further awareness on the part of staff and faculty of these psychological developmental issues. She would also like to see a more conscious emphasis on self-understanding and self-acceptance. *Being in these summer programs can facilitate self-acceptance and self-esteem by giving them an opportunity to be with students like themselves in advanced classes and in campus life*, she writes. *They also provide a unique opportunity to consciously incorporate some affective education in the overall program.*

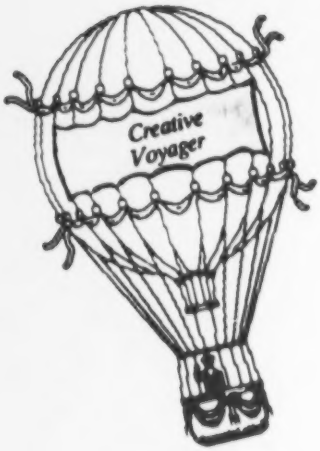
Kathleen would also like to see greater collaboration between educators and parents and more appreciation of the parents' role in knowing and working with their child. *As wise and invaluable as the guidance is that we receive from the talent searches, parents know their children as no one else can, in all their uniqueness—their maturity, response to competition, comfort with their giftedness.* She would also like to see a mechanism for parents of program students to network: *While family and individual values differ, experiences with the difficult decisions involved in guiding these unique students could be of help to other parents.*

Having experienced the talent search programs, growing pains and all, over this extended time, Kathleen expresses deep appreciation for the programs and for those who nurtured their development. For those whose lives they have touched, the talent search programs have made an important difference.

Mary Lynn Baum is past president of the Gifted Children's Association of British Columbia, Canada, editor since 1983 of its newsletter ***Bright Connections***, and the parent of a highly gifted teenager.

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY

Fairy Tales, Part III



Creative Ventures And Encounters

Jerry Flack

Tour Guide

Imagination is more important than knowledge, for knowledge is limited while imagination embraces the entire world.

Albert Einstein

Einstein understood the importance of imagination and once prescribed fairy tales as the best reading for youngsters who aspired to careers in science. He appreciated the fertile ground fairy tales offer for stretching the imagination and fostering creative growth in young people. On this voyage, we will examine traditional fairy tale characters in a contemporary light.

The creative thinking abilities of *fluency*, *flexibility*, *originality*, and *elaboration* may be taught and reinforced using fairy tale characters and contents. Both fluency and entrepreneurial skills receive attention when students simulate business planning and engage in developing and stocking the nation's first all-children's mall, Cinderella City. Students can brainstorm the kinds of businesses they will invite to participate in their venture. New mall tenants might include Rapunzel's Hair Care, Little Red's Candy Basket, Alice's Card Shop, and Prince Charming's Formal Wear. While the entrepreneurs are busy concocting capital-raising schemes and planning the grand opening festivities, the class architects can generate blueprints for the mall, and the designers can draw interior sketches for each of the mall's new businesses.

Students may also exercise fluency skills in generating many ideas for a newspaper based on a fairy tale motif or design that will herald the opening of the new mall. What kinds of newspaper news items, weather forecasts, sports stories, advice columns, classified advertisements, and stock market reports can be fashioned from fairy tale data? Once students have generated many possible ideas, the class journalists can create a delightful and highly original edition of *The Black Forest Times*. The top news story will no doubt be about the opening ceremonies for the new Cinderella City Mall.

Flexible thinkers can help Goldilocks stock her new gift store, the Bears' Cottage. What are all the different kinds of merchandise Goldilocks could sell? What are all the different and creative ways that she might advertise her store in *The Black Forest Times*?

Additional flexible thinkers may create several different advertising brochures for the many mall stores that can then be delivered to citizens by the Jolly Postman.

Originality is utilized by students who create a new line of greeting cards based on fairy tale themes to be sold in Alice's Card Shop at the Cinderella City Mall. What fairy tale themes, characters, and allusions can they use to celebrate birthdays, births, marriages, holidays, graduations, and other special occasions?

Students will use elaboration in developing the kernel idea of a fairy tale calendar into a gorgeous product Alice can give to her most loyal customers for the new year. Students can create a 12-month calendar with a fairy tale motif. They might, for example, choose to concentrate on the houses of 12 fairy tale characters. Each of the 12 picture panels drawn would depict a different home associated with a classic fairy tale character. Other themes might be the bedrooms, diets, or wardrobes of fairy tale characters.

(Continued on page 18)

My Best Summer by *Michael Leviton*

Not only did I not want to go, I dreaded the horrible truth that had befallen me.... I had to go to summer camp. Not even summer camp, a program called CTY where I would take writing classes for three weeks and stay at a college. I figured it would be like taking school over the summer, but even after the first day, I knew it was going to be the best summer I have ever had.

Definitely the best thing about CTY is being on your own, without annoying brothers and sisters or parents to bug you. The Center for Talented Youth (CTY) is a division of The Johns Hopkins University that offers classes for junior high school students from all over the world. I lived in a dorm with a roommate for three weeks at Loyola Marymount University in California.

It seemed to me like everybody would be homesick at a place like this, but they kept us so busy, we forgot all about it. They have all kinds of activities from sports to discussions about aliens to testing if you have ESP. If I didn't feel like doing anything, I was perfectly free just to hang out.

I met all kinds of people that I still talk to and after the puny few weeks I knew them I felt like I'd known them forever. I now have friends in Pennsylvania, Oregon, New York, Germany, Canada, and Australia. I even have new friends here in California.

The CTY classes are great, too. It's not even close to anything like school because the teachers are much less dominant than the students so the students run things more or less. It was more like a club where we would share each other's writing and get criticisms. I wrote some of my best writing there.

I think CTY completely changed my outlook on everything. I used to try and fit in and be like everybody else but CTY taught me that I could be my own person and be as wacky or crazy as I want to be, people would still like me and if they don't, I don't care. I'm much happier now and have more friends than before. I realized that a lot of people I used to like really weren't worth liking and made new friends. One of my favorite movies is called "Heathers" and in it Winona Ryder describes my old friends perfectly. She said, "They don't seem like friends, they seem more like business associates and our job is being popular and stuff." That's all I really used to care about. Beyond all costs I wanted to be popular. Now I realize that the way you get popular is by being yourself and if people don't like you, it doesn't matter.

In conclusion I say that CTY wasn't only good while I was there but was still good after. I'm a much better person than before and CTY is the main reason.

Michael Leviton is 13 years old and an eighth grader at the Sepulveda Gifted Magnet in Granada Hills, California.

FAIRY TALES continued from page 17

The bank at the mall is managed by the giant of Jack and the Beanstalk fame. That pesky fellow Jack keeps trying to take the gold from the giant's bank. The giant is angry and believes he should put a stop to Jack's raids on the bank's treasury. Ask students to invent a security system that will make the bank burglar proof.

A multi-plex movie theatre will be a feature of the Cinderella City Mall. What are the titles of the six movies that will play during the grand opening of the mall? Commission creative students to author a screenplay for a movie version of a brand new fairy tale. Students should mention or include some of the following items in the scenarios they create for their new fairy tales:

- parking meter
- hungry mouse
- blue satin pillow
- white rose
- black cat
- football
- red hat
- copper key

The climax of the grand opening of the Cinderella City Mall will be a magnificent dinner attended by the President of the United States and the following fairy tale characters: Little Red Riding Hood, Goldilocks, the Steadfast Tin Soldier, Snow White, Hansel and Gretel, Rapunzel, Cinderella (of course!), the Seven Dwarfs, Sleeping Beauty, the Three Bears, Prince Charming, Jack (without beanstalk), and Puss in Boots. Ask the student gourmets in the classroom to plan the menu for the dinner feast. Artistically creative students can design the table decorations and papier mache masks for each of the guests to wear. Others students can create a script and program for the gala speeches and entertainments to be enjoyed by the honored guests. All the students can assume the many roles, wear the appropriate masks, and stage the gala affair as a finale to this voyage to the incredibly creative new mall, Cinderella City. This activity provides a wonderful opportunity to develop a variety of student talents.

Jerry Flack, Ph.D., is a President's Teaching Scholar and Professor of Gifted Education at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs, and the author of several books, including ***Inventing, Inventions, and Inventors*** and ***Lives of Promise.***

ANTENNA . . . .

Current Developments in Gifted Education

Recently I jogged past a lavender pasqueflower—the first wild bloom to pop out this spring. It looked lonely and fragile, but in reality it was strong and tenacious. For several mornings I observed it, sometimes beaten down by fresh snow, sometimes closed up tight against dark unfriendly skies. But it always reopened to the sun's encouragement, as if to proclaim, "I'm here! Nurture me. Fulfill my needs, and I'll grow."

Of course, I saw in this flower the analogy of a child with special needs, waiting patiently for a teacher to meet those needs and help that child to grow. I carried the example a bit further and visualized a gifted child beaten down by repeated drill and lack of challenge closing up tight against a system that doesn't seem to understand that special child.

When I jog, my thoughts wander freely, and my stream of consciousness moves from flower to child to the entire gifted education movement. I see it initially emerging in triumph, battered by lack of funding and commitment, closed tightly against hostility and misunderstanding, and eventually—tenacious and strong—reopening and flourishing with the resurgence of understanding and hope.

It is spring, and many flowers bloom. Hopefully, this is a time of renewal for our vulnerable field of gifted and talented education. If we recognize talent in our young people and nurture it, they, too, can blossom.

A tenth grade student from Wisconsin shares her talent in the following poem:

Gift of Knowledge
for the knowing to come
Slowly new
An emergence.
rising from what
had been a silt silence
justly fitting the corners
and curves of
an emptiness no one
had ever
known was
there.
With the permanence of a stone wall
grown to kiss the line of earth and sky
borne beneath the giving hands of
many teachers
now
only joy in
this arrival at existing
at first tasting of the light.

Binta Jeffers, Age 15

Dorothy Knopper, M.A., is a private consultant for gifted education in Colorado, author of ***Parent Education: Parents as Partners***, and publisher of ***Understanding Our Gifted.***

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1994 SUMMER INSTITUTE OF GIFTED EDUCATION

June 26-July 1, 1994. Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The theme for the conference is "Curriculum Empowerment: Theory into Practice for the Gifted/Able Learner." For information, contact Dr. Rick Courtright at (910) 727-2611 or Dr. Linda Morris (910) 724-5330.

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NEXT ISSUE

FOCUS:
ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDERS

Gifted Children with Attention Deficit Disorder
Deirdre V. Lovecky, Ph.D.

The Perplexed Perfectionist
George W. Dorry, Ph.D.

The world is always ready to receive talent with open arms. Very often it does not know what to do with genius.

Oliver Wendell Holmes
The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table

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UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED®

Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

May-June, 1994

Volume 6, Issue 5

Gifted Children with Attention Deficit Disorder

Deirdre V. Lovecky, Ph.D.

Sean is a charming boy, passionate about life and everything he does. He loves to make things, and is skilled at origami at age six. What Sean doesn't do is schoolwork. He complains it is boring, and he hates it. Actually most of the work *is* too easy for Sean. Nevertheless, he seems unwilling or unable to complete even tasks he initially likes and finds challenging. These he claims are "too hard," and he gives up easily if he can't find an immediate answer. Sean tends to interrupt the class, butts into discussions and games of other children, and has difficulty sitting still or waiting his turn. Parenting Sean is difficult as he demands so much attention. His parents worry the rest of the family will take second place while Sean grows up spoiled, thinking he should always come first.

Gifted children with attention deficit disorder (ADD) travel a tough road through childhood. Their behavioral symptoms can inhibit academic success, and have emotional and social consequences. Being gifted and also having an attention deficit can seem like a contradiction. How can gifted children who can concentrate for so long on something they choose have a problem paying attention?

(Continued on page 7)

FOCUS ON:

ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDERS

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The Perplexed Perfectionist

George W. Dorry, Ph.D.

After the celebration of an achievement, there is a sigh of relief from the perfectionist that, once more, the dream was enacted into reality. That happened yesterday when a child accomplished building the block structure which he had in mind, and it happened years ago when the Mayor of New York City cut the ribbon on the world's longest suspension bridge, the Verranzano Narrows Bridge. The positive side of perfectionism is the ability to conceive something of a higher order and create it (Silverman, 1993). To paraphrase T. S. Eliot (1958), the negative side of perfectionism is the gap between the idea and the reality, between the conception and the creation. It falls on two groups of individuals as often as the sun shines: gifted children in general and gifted children with attention deficits.

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) is a neurochemically based deficiency in the areas of the brain that control selective attention and the "executive function" areas that direct planning, logistics, and a holistic overview of situations. The underlying condition of the attention deficit

(Continued on page 10)

FROM THE EDITOR

Cool Breezes to you from the Rocky Mountains!

We have a hot topic for this summer issue: Attention Deficit Disorders. Few questions have proven to be as perplexing to parents and educators as the relationship between giftedness and ADD/ADHD. Often considered the catch-all diagnosis of the '90s, the tremendous number of gifted children labeled ADD is unnerving. Dee Lovecky has found a higher incidence of ADD among exceptionally gifted children than among more moderately gifted children. What does this mean? We really don't know. As a clinician with 30 years of experience with giftedness, I can honestly say that the more cases I see that look like ADD, the less I understand about the connection between the two.

Until 1994, "ADD" was used to designate attention deficit disorder with and without hyperactivity, although most cases are actually ADHD: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. In the new *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV)* just released from the American Psychiatric Association, "AD/HD" has become the new appellation. In different articles in this issue, you will find the syndrome variously referred to as "ADD," "ADHD," "AD/HD," and "ADD/ADHD," with just as many viewpoints on this complex issue.

Our two lead articles are written by psychologists who are knowledgeable about attentional disorders and giftedness—a rare combination, unfortunately. Dr. Deirdre Lovecky's article is based on the study of 70 gifted and highly gifted children with ADD. Well known for her theoretical and clinical perspectives on giftedness, Dee specializes in gifted children with ADD. Dr.George Dorry is a noted specialist in the area of attention deficit disorders who has seen a substantial number of gifted children in his practice. Our special feature is a dialogue between Sharon Lind and myself on "ADHD or Gifted?" in an attempt to reconcile the clinical and educational viewpoints. Annemarie Roeper enters the discussion with her own gentle philosophy of respect for the unfolding of the individual self. This issue will give you much to think about.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate three friends and associates of *Understanding Our Gifted*. Martha Morelock, a regular contributor to *UOG*, just won the $2,000 1994 Hollingworth Award from Intertel Foundation for her project, "The Profoundly Gifted Child in Family Context: Eight Case Studies." Kathi Kearney, our highly gifted columnist, along with co-author, Jene LeBlanc, just won special mention from the Mensa Education & Research Foundation for their excellent paper, "Forgotten Pioneers in the Study of Gifted African-Americans." And Dr. Julian Stanley, founder of the Talent Search, has been elected a winner of the James McKeen Cattell Fellow Award in Applied Psychology for 1994. In one of his cherished letters, congratulating us on "producing a superb issue" of *UOG* on Talent Searches, Dr. Stanley was gracious enough to share this great honor with all of us who "have labored hard on behalf of the academically gifted." Thank you, Dr. Stanley, for all the supportive letters you have sent to those of us who write in this field. It helps to know that someone we respect cared that much.

Linda Silverman

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Annemarie Roeper

PARENTING

Revisiting Childhood

Birth: the birth of a child is a mystery and a miracle which is repeated daily all over the globe. In fact, birth is many mysteries: the fact of creation and life itself; the ways in which all newborns are similar; and most of all, the infinite variety of body, mind and soul so evident in each new miracle of birth.

This endless variety repeats itself also in nature, wherever we look. Just watch the unfolding of the flowers as they grow in rich earth. Each exhibits a unique beauty which is increased manifold by the beauty of their combined uniqueness. All human beings hold inside them the mysteries of personal growth. Pondering this wealth of nature is awe inspiring.

As each child gathers experience, her individual personality grows as she follows her life path. On the way, the growing child's body, mind and soul are nurtured in different ways by the adults around her. The manner in which children grow and bloom and the directions which they take are as much a miracle as the birth itself. No matter what type of nourishment they are offered, be it physical, intellectual or emotional, it will not change the fundamental basis of their personalities any more than it would change the color of their eyes. By the same token, exposure to any kind of learning, such as play experience or teaching, will not change the unique way of thinking and feeling and growing embedded in each self. However, the process and content of education can either support or hinder the growth of the soul of the individual.

For this reason, the person who grows up in an environment dedicated to personal growth has the greatest chance to actualize the full bloom of his or her individuality and can most easily share this wealth with others. Unhindered personal development is the birthright of each living being on earth. It is an unspoken promise made by those who become parents. Moreover, growth of mind, body and soul is an involuntary activity beyond our control. It is active, not passive, and when something interferes with this movement it creates pain, suffering, irritation, anger, hostility or stunted growth. This is particularly true for the gifted who are often driven by their own inner agenda.

The task for parents and teachers is to support this growth and delight in it and gently create an environment which allows this development to happen. There are certain skills which are necessary for all to acquire in order to find their place in society. However, how and when this learning takes place again differs with each child's process of growth. The conclusion these insights *must* lead us to is that real education can only, and therefore must, start with the child and her uniqueness. There are educational communities where this happens. However, the world of education has become more and more governed by a totally different point of view: a view which seems to forget realities of the world of childhood and the need for carefree growth; a view which begins with the curriculum and imposes it on the child. It decides what a child should learn and how she should learn it, no matter who this child is, how she grows, or what she needs. Instead, educators have decided that all children should learn the same thing at the same time and in the same manner. We set standards and goals for them to reach. We decide that learning is the passive intake of information acquired sitting quietly at a desk, to be given back to us as accurately as possible. All this is decided in advance despite our knowledge that children need to

(Continued on page 4)

be actively involved in their learning; they must want to learn; they do not learn the same thing at the same time; they do not give it back to us as they were taught it; they digest it and turn it into something else which becomes their own.

We believe that skill learning is the basis of all learning when in truth it only makes sense as part of an overall growth process. We are surrounding the child with a host of demands that interfere with the flow of learning. Children are anxiously trying to be good and obedient and to live up to the expectations of the adults who guide them. Their self image becomes based solely on their acceptance by the important adults in their lives, which forces them to repress that which drives from the inside.

Maria Montessori says: *If during the delicate period of growth, disrespectful demands are inflicted upon the child his spirit will be diminished and it may never be possible for him to accomplish great deeds as an adult. For such a child must perform the cruel task of hiding his real self, fragmenting it and burying in his subconscious his wealth of aspiration that will forever be unrealized.* (Wolf, 1989, p.33)

If this is true for all children, it is even more true for the gifted, for their inner urge to fulfill themselves pushes like a storm against a wall of expectation that may be foreign to their nature and needs. Their "great deeds" will never be accomplished. Instead, they cannot help but disappoint their teachers, parents, and themselves. The inner struggle becomes so great that they develop behavior problems, disrupt classrooms; teachers become more concerned, look at the children with a concerned expression, call conferences with parents; the child is then exposed to many tests and she may now be defined with two labels: gifted and ADD.

In many cases the attention deficit will disappear with a different situation, teacher or a change of schools. A child who could have been delighted with herself, whose parents could have enjoyed her daily is now unhappy and struggling with parents and teachers. She forgets her dreams.

The paradox is that our society, which takes pride in its plurality, bases its approach to education on conformity. Just as I am finishing this article, a mother calls to set up an appointment for a consultation. "I have a gifted nine year old," she says. I sadly finish her sentence, "And he has been identified as having attention deficit disorder."

Parents now, more than in the past, must be their child's advocate and find out if their gifted child's learning environment truly allows him to grow and spread his inner wings.

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Dr. Annemarie Roeper is a consultant on the gifted in Oakland, California, and author of the book, ***Educating Children for Life***. Co-founder of the Roeper City and Country School and the ***Roeper Review***, Annemarie has inspired a worldwide focus on global awareness in gifted education.

A Child

A child:
A young human being:
delicate and strong
aware and oblivious
A young human being
Ready to meet the world
To cope with it
to love it
and to master it
To make order out of chaos.

A world:
beautiful and ugly
tender and cruel
ordered and chaotic.

A world:
ready to meet the child
yet able to forget it
to nurture it and grow it
to use it and destroy it
to know it and to love it.

The young human being
and the world are
strangers to each other
and yet they are one.
Education is the
dramatic encounter
between the two.
Will it lead to destruction
or to creative health?

Annemarie Roeper, 1973

INSTRUCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Ignoring the Gifted Can Be Hazardous to Our Health

The Fall 1993 release of the Department of Education national report on gifted and talented children detailed the same national neglect previously reported by various commissions and individuals. I personally reflect that in the last 20 years advocates for the gifted seem to have made no progress toward appropriate education for these students and, indeed, in most states, budget cuts have resulted in visible losses. In spite of the growth of the National Association for Gifted Children and some federal funding, the general outlook for gifted children in public schools continues to be very grim.

However, an article by Ellen Goodman (1993) provides food for thought. In her article, Ms. Goodman points out that human behavior has changed significantly within memory. One of the examples she cites is the changed public view of drinking and driving. Within about five years, the designated driver concept became socially and politically correct. A sustained media campaign created a new social role and a societal preference.

What if we were to apply this idea to gifted children? What if "nerds," "eggheads," "brains," and "schoolboys/girls" became objects of respect? What if billboards and the media carried public service announcements such as, "Not educating gifted children properly is hazardous to our (society's) health"? What if parents didn't "hide" or apologize for their child's intellectual gifts? What if education for the gifted were allotted the same concern and funds as education for the mentally handicapped or linguistically different? The answer is probably far better than we dream.

You may be thinking that giftedness could never be accepted and valued by the general public. However, remember the changes in public beliefs that have resulted in fewer eggs being eaten, more seat belts being worn, the decline of smoking, and, of course, the designated driver (Goodman, 1993). Before a public campaign on the gifted could begin, parents, educators, and advocates of the gifted need to change some of their behavior. Perhaps we need to make personal affirmations before we can go public. Repeating statements such as, *"Giftedness is an asset," "Giftedness is neither earned nor created. it is, and it creates real and varied needs,"* or even simply, *"Giftedness is good,"* might prepare us mentally to convince the world.

When each of us personally has convinced ourselves that giftedness is O.K., our behavior will change. Parents will not feel compelled to apologize for asking for appropriate education for their gifted children, teachers will not feel uncomfortable that they "get" to teach the smart kids, and advocates who have given up what seems a hopeless task will find new avenues of advocacy.

Convincing the world at large that neglecting the gifted is destructive and dangerous is a formidable task. However, if we became proactive toward our goal of raising a nation's consciousness and changing its behavior, we might prevail. We know it can be done; if smokers can be convinced that they must give up their addiction to tobacco, certainly people can be taught the benefits of educating gifted children, and the injustice and danger of not doing so. Ignoring the educational needs of gifted children is hazardous to society's health. *We* know this; now we must act on our knowledge.

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THE READING ROOM

Welcome to our second discussion of an author whose work may be especially appealing to the brightest young readers. Orson Scott Card is primarily a writer of science fiction; however, readers who do not consider themselves sci-fi buffs will find much of interest in his complex, passionately moral and extremely intelligent novels and stories. Card does not aim for a readership of children and young adults, but young characters are vitally important in most of his works. A child able to cope with the reading level should be able to cope with the content.

Newcomers to his work would do well to begin with the three books about Ender—A.K.A. Andrew Wiggin. The first, *Ender's Game*, tells the story of Andrew's youth, during which he becomes a hero to all humanity, winning the "Bugger Wars" against an alien species of insect-like creatures by learning enough about their biology to wipe them out—an act of "xenocide," the purposeful destruction of another sentient species. Though all humanity rejoices at what is perceived to be deliverance from demonic aliens, Andrew himself has learned that the Buggers he has destroyed were not in any sense evil; his guilt is overwhelming.

The second book, *Speaker for the Dead*, takes place three thousand years later. Relativity accounts for Andrew's remaining alive for this period of time. Time passes more slowly for a near light-speed space traveler than for the planet-bound, and Andrew (now Ender) has been traveling. To expiate his guilt he has taken upon himself the task of explaining the beauty of Bugger culture, becoming a "Speaker for the Dead." Unknown to the rest of humanity, he has managed to save the hive queen of the Bugger species (who has cocooned herself and her fertilized eggs) and has been searching the earth-colonized "Hundred Worlds" for a planet suitable to the re-establishment of the Bugger species.

The setting of this second book is Lusitania, a planet colonized by Brazilian Catholics, that is home to a species known as the Pequininos (called "Piggies"), but also to a devastating virus (the descolada) that kills all plant or animal species not native to the planet. The central characters are Piggies and the colony's scientists, successors to those who devised the anti-viral agents to keep the descolada from destroying the colony. The central question is whether Piggies and humans (and eventually Buggers, once Ender brings the Hive Queen here) can share a single planet in spite of the vast differences in their biologies and their cultures.

Though all three books are strongly philosophical, it is the third, *Xenocide*, in which the threads of all the moral and scientific issues at the heart of the series are brought together. The Starways Congress that rules Earth and the Hundred Planets has sent battleships toward Lusitania to destroy it so as to keep the deadly descolada virus from spreading throughout the universe and killing all other living species. Can three species (and perhaps an extremely unusual fourth) save themselves from that external threat and from the threat each poses to the others? Only brilliant science and inter-species cooperation can save them.

Card has created a sprawling parable that confronts an amazing variety of fundamental questions. A small sampling: Can science and religion coexist? Is genocide the inevitable result of a clash of unequal cultures? Can morality be judged by an individual's intention or only by the results of his or her behavior? Does the concept of free will have a meaning in a world of genetic programming? In no case is a simple answer provided. Reading Ender's story is like participating in a good, long adventure while at the same time exploring many of the most challenging and fascinating intellectual, moral and philosophical issues that have occupied humanity's finest minds.

Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, ***Guiding the Gifted Child.***

How can it be that the very tasks that most gifted children find so easy are the ones that give those with ADD the most trouble? Part of the problem is their advanced skills. A child who can think out complex problems and is primarily a holistic learner resists the more usual step-by-step sequential style taught by schools. However, most gifted children can perform sequential and repetitious tasks even though they prefer not to do them, and may resist if asked to do them over and over. Those with ADD have trouble performing these tasks any time, resist doing them even when they would be beneficial and cannot vary the style used for learning. Thus, gifted children without ADD may not like doing 30 examples of newly learned math problems for homework, but they can do them. Those with ADD cannot. Unfortunately, when gifted children are placed in programs where the work is far too easy for them, differentiating "won't" from "can't" is very difficult.

Whether a particular gifted child has attention deficit disorder is not easily determined. Diagnosis should be based on an extensive evaluation of the child by a psychologist or developmental pediatrician familiar with both giftedness and attention deficit disorder. Diagnosis is best accomplished by use of test materials that detect variations in attention and concentration over time, behavior checklists standardized on children with ADD, and a complete history given by parents. For this paper data were obtained from more than 70 gifted children with ADD evaluated in this manner.

Symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder

The symptoms exhibited can be divided into five categories: *poor concentration and attention, low frustration tolerance, distractibility, impulsivity,* and *hyperactivity.*

Problems with attention and concentration occur when a child has difficulty focusing and sustaining attention on a variety of tasks of moderate interest, or in shifting attention among tasks. Often people think that ADD means the child cannot focus attention at all, but this is not true. For example, Barkley (1991) and Weiss and Hechtman (1993), who have worked with hundreds of average children with ADD, state that attentional difficulties are most evident in situations requiring sustained attention to dull, boring, repetitive tasks such as schoolwork, homework, or chores. Children described by teachers as having attention spans of 3 to 6 minutes were found to be able to sit and concentrate on television or other preferred activity for hours. Difficulty with concentration is more apparent on tasks that include elements of boredom, fatigue, repetition, and low levels of reward and motivation. The key to understanding the attentional problems is that the tasks are not stimulating. When the children are stimulated, especially by a task they select, they are quite able to pay attention. With gifted children the same holds true. The difference appears to be that gifted children with ADD have more preferred activities to start with, and somewhat longer attention spans than average children with ADD; thus, they look attentive for more activities despite attentional deficits for schoolwork.

> ***The key to understanding the attentional problems is that the tasks are not stimulating.***

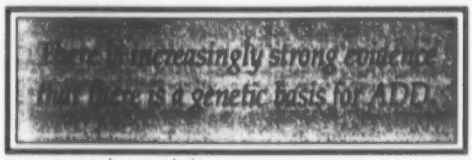
Shifting attention over tasks is a problem for many with ADD. On one hand, they shift rapidly from task to task or skip within a task from one part to another quickly. On the other hand, they have trouble shifting once they are immersed in a preferred activity. In fact, many have trouble with changes and shifts in any routine. Trying to get such a youngster to stop what she is doing to eat, take a bath, go to school or to bed is very difficult.

Low frustration tolerance is a second feature of ADD. The child finds it difficult to persist on tasks, gives up at the first sign of uncertainty, finds many tasks boring and cannot engage in a task enough to overcome boredom. Only when tasks are novel does frustration and boredom ease. Because of this easy boredom with tasks, task persistence is low and the child does not complete the work. Fatigue and sensory overload increase the problem so the ability to sustain attention is decreased by too much of the same type of work. Thus, giving an ADD child a whole page of practice examples and expecting good performance is likely to result in incomplete work and a bored and frustrated child. Giving the child fewer examples, immediately checking them and reinforcing good effort is more likely to result in work completion and good effort.

Distractibility is the third feature of ADD. Recent research (summarized in Weiss & Hechtman, 1993) suggests that children with ADD may be no more distractible than other children on certain types of distractors, but more so on others. For example, a high appeal distractor such as a fire truck going by the classroom would be distracting to all children but the rustling of papers, how a sunbeam hits the wall, or someone coughing would not ordinarily distract most children, but would children with ADD. Since gifted children tend to be more sensitive to the environment to begin with, the number of potentially distracting environmental phenomena is truly staggering for the gifted child with ADD.

Impulsive behavior includes acting without thinking; needing a lot of supervision; frequently calling out in class; interrupting others; intruding on others' games; engaging in frequent, unnecessary risk-taking; having difficulty waiting turns in a game or in a group situation; and responding without waiting for directions to be completed. Impulsive responding is the result of behavioral *disinhibition* in which children have difficulty monitoring and cuing themselves to watch and wait. They act first and think second. Impulsive gifted children tend to guess at answers without actually working out problems. They jump to conclusions about what the directions for a task will be and rush to do it. The problem is in the result. Some gifted children without ADD also jump to conclusions about questions being asked because they truly already know the answer. Those with ADD tend to guess incorrectly, and to insist they are right without rechecking their work. They also find it extremely difficult to allow a slower pace than they are going so they interrupt. Their constant calling out and disruption is a problem even for teachers of gifted classes.

Hyperactivity is the final symptom of children with attention deficit disorder. Not all children show increased motoric activity. For some, excessive activity shows itself in talking too much without getting to the point. For others there are no outward manifestations of hyperactivity but inwardly the children subjectively feel as if their minds are racing, and they can never relax or shut off thinking. This last group may also have symptoms of anxiety due to this mental arousal that never stops, including during sleep.



Other Symptoms. In addition to the primary symptoms there are secondary symptoms exhibited by most children with ADD. These include difficulties with planning and organization, sequencing of items, keeping track of time, and dealing adequately with overload and fatigue. Problems with motivation and peer relationships may also exist.

Types of Attention Deficit Disorder

There are two main types of attention deficit disorder: with hyperactivity, and without hyperactivity. Those with hyperactivity often are diagnosed in the early years while those without hyperactivity are often missed, especially if they are girls. Many more boys than girls appear to have ADD by a ratio of about 3:1 (Barkley, 1991); however, girls may be overlooked since they tend to try to conform and please teachers and parents more than do boys. There is increasingly strong evidence that there is a genetic basis for ADD. In adults whose children have ADD, but who have not been diagnosed themselves, many report symptoms similar to the child's in their own childhood.

Attention deficit disorders differ in severity. At one extreme are severely affected children who are very hyperactive, impulsive and quick-tempered. They have trouble attending for long to much of anything, and may also evidence motivational problems. They are often diagnosed in preschool years because their behavior is so problematic. At the other extreme are those who are not diagnosed until the work load of school becomes too great for their powers of concentration and attention. Often this happens with mildly affected gifted children in middle school though it may not occur until high school or even college (Freeman, 1988).

Issues of Giftedness

Being gifted presents another set of issues. When a child is both gifted and has ADD, it can be difficult to determine which behaviors are due to ADD and which to giftedness. These issues include asynchrony, increased intensity, sensitivity, emotional reactivity, intellectual and imaginational excitation. All of these are commonly found in gifted children, though for those with ADD the behavioral correlates of these traits may be more problematic.

Asynchrony is a particularly difficult issue for the gifted (Columbus Group, 1991). Asynchrony refers to discrepancies among chronological, intellectual, physical, social and emotional development. For average children, the discrepancies are small. For average children with ADD, the discrepancy between chronological age and social and emotional age is larger. For gifted children, all areas of development are usually above chronological age and discrepant from each other. For the gifted child with ADD, the discrepancy between intellectual age and social and emotional ages is very wide and the child may be below chronological age in these areas. Thus, gifted children, with ADD may perform academically at a high level but find that gifted peers do not tolerate immature social skills or immature emotional reactions to frustration. These children may find they are out of sync with everyone. [See Lovecky, 1993, *UOG, 5* (5A), 3].

Emotional reactivity, sensitivity to the environment, as well as increased intellectual and imaginational excitation (Piechowski, 1986) present more of a challenge for gifted children with ADD than other gifted children because those with ADD find it so difficult to self-monitor, self-cue, and self-regulate. The disinhibition seen in ADD affects all areas of giftedness so

that characteristics associated with being gifted may be even more difficult to manage for the ADD gifted child than for other gifted children.

Strengths of Gifted Children with ADD

There is a lack of focus in the literature on some of the accompanying strengths of ADD. In my sample of gifted children with ADD, the children, when motivated, were found to *work quickly and produce work of significant quality*. They had many novel ideas and were very creative in thinking and writing. Because they tend to notice things no one else would, they may devise new ways of looking at things.

Spontaneity was a trait that was very valued and useful, allowing gifted children with ADD to move on past mistakes or failures. Children reported feeling joyful and spreading that joy to others. Many of the children invited others to join in preferred activities, particularly sports, art, music and drama. Because the children were spontaneous, they seemed not to worry very much about how they looked to others. This enabled a number of them to perform in theaters or orchestras. Of the children seen in this study, an amazing number were *performers* of one type or another.

Educationally most of these children require both highly stimulating work at their level of achievement and compensatory techniques.

Another strength for many appeared to be a *sweet temperament and trust of people*. Even while lacking social skills and being socially rejected, these children retained their positive view of others and of humanity in general. Perhaps their short attention spans and poorer sense of time or their lack of awareness of social cues made the rejections somewhat less noticeable, but these children often seemed less hurt by the meanness of other children. They tended not to bear a grudge and to be quickly *forgiving*. These traits, when they did make friends, secured a stronger friendship for them, often with a best friend.

Helping Gifted Children with ADD

Dealing with a high need for stimulation throughout life, requirements for structure, physical activity and movement, and positive reinforcement are crucial in planning educational programs. These needs are also important in parenting gifted children with ADD, and in helping them to deal with social and emotional aspects of their lives.

Educationally most of these children require both highly stimulating work at their level of achievement and compensatory techniques: use of structure in the form of point systems; ameliorating the work load for practice and rote work; giving specific instruction in writing skills including organization and elaboration of ideas; using word processors and computer programs to deal with poorer handwriting and faster thought processes than those of average students. Many of these children work better in small groups or individually so pairing them with one or two other gifted children and a mentor can be an ideal situation for acceleration and enrichment. For most of them it is important to avoid giving work that is too easy and too repetitious, which reinforces poor attention and poor work habits.

Parents need to provide structure so children master self-care skills and learn to contribute to the family. It is important not to let the child with ADD be a privileged character who does not have to do chores or behave well; yet, parents need to temper expectations with knowledge about the problems of the child. Several authors have written specifically to help parents with these tasks (Freeman, 1988; Garber, Garber & Spitzman, 1990; Taylor, 1990).

Medication is an issue that needs to be considered when either the child's symptoms are too severe or too pervasive to overcome using behavioral means alone. Symptoms are too severe if children are unable to learn and retain skills being taught or cannot generalize well from one situation to another. Therefore, a child may not look hyperactive, but may need medication to pay attention long enough to learn necessary developmental academic, social and self-regulatory skills. The same is true for a child whose deficits occur in many areas of life. Overcoming problems in so many areas using behavioral means alone may be asking the impossible of the child. Medication can help these youngsters to acquire and use skills that have been lacking.

Conclusion

This article has focused on some of the problems found in gifted children with attention deficit disorder. The issues associated with attention deficit disorder, like the issues associated with giftedness, can be lifelong. Gifted children with ADD need special planning and programming so that they can acquire skills necessary to lead productive adult lives.

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THE PERPLEXED PERFECTIONIST Continued from page 1

sometimes has a component of varying degrees of physical hyperactivity, hence the term Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD). The soon to be published fourth edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-IV*, 1994) separates four types of AD/HD: Predominantly Inattentive Type; Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Type; Combined Type; and Not Otherwise Specified (e.g., an adult with AD/HD who was hyperactive as a child, but not as an adult). Gifted individuals may have any of the four types of AD/HD. While the differential diagnostic decisions are outside of the scope of this article, Lovecky's article in this issue (pp. 1, 7-10) discusses AD/HD characteristics in more detail. Readers are also referred to Lind (1993) and Webb and Latimer (1993) for more information.

Children with AD/HD tend to be of higher intelligence than the average.

Although only a limited number of gifted children have attentional difficulties of any type, children with AD/HD tend to be of higher intelligence than the average. While firm research findings are not yet available, it may be that highly gifted children have a higher incidence of AD/HD-like symptoms, if not diagnosable AD/HD.

Perfectionism is first on Tannenbaum and Baldwin's (1983) list of the shared characteristics of highly motivated high IQ children vs. learning disabled children with high IQs. Among the many characteristics which individuals with AD/HD and the gifted have in common, perfectionism occurs with sufficient frequency to be worthy of consideration. Since the positive and negative sides of perfectionism apply to perfectionistic individuals whether they are children, adolescents, or adults, the ideas can be applied to gifted individuals of any age with or without AD/HD. We will, however, refer to children as the primary example.

Perfectionism's Yin and Yang

For the sake of brevity, we will not debate whether perfectionism is good or bad. Let us instead accept a Taoist perspective which emphasizes the yin and yang, the acknowledgment of both positive and negative sides to perfectionism. If we start from that point of view, we can address the more productive issue of, "When is perfectionism useful for the individual's achievement and when is it a detriment?" so that we can minimize the negative and maximize the positive aspects of perfectionism.

May the force be with you: The struggle between good and evil in "Star Wars" can be an analogy to perfectionism's dual nature. The "force" is the positive drive to create something better and the satisfaction of achieving it, while the "dark side" can be anxiety and self-recriminating frustration when that achievement is not yet attained. As concerned observers, we want to see the motivating "force" as the individual strives for higher achievements, but want him or her to avoid feeling anxiety, frustration and lessened self-esteem.

Gifted children with AD/HD often have high personal and interpersonal expectations. However, they frequently experience underachievement because there is consistent variability in their performance. They are occasionally on target and as productive as expected. At other times they are susceptible to distractions from high levels of "internal" stimuli (thoughts) as well as from kinesthetic or external visual and auditory stimuli. Then they are not able to maintain the previous level of performance.

The gifted child with AD/HD is most often well intentioned, wanting to please and motivated towards achievement, but frustrated, because performance can vary without any apparent, identifiable motivational difference. The child may develop a learned strategy of perfectionism as over-compensation to increase the likelihood of achievement. For

example, "If I demand that my homework is perfect, I have a better chance of getting it right."

Gifted children without attention deficits may have many of the same characteristics as gifted AD/HD children, but performance is more within their control. Both groups are likely to be bombarded by high internal distractibility— "overexcitabilities" (Piechowski, 1979), and to have lower frustration tolerance for tasks without novelty or intrinsic motivational value. However, non-ADD gifted children *can* choose to persist if, for instance, the motivational value is changed by a highly rewarding outcome. The gifted AD/HD child, for whom internal or external distractors prohibit maintaining attention to the task, may not be able to persist and perform. The level of impulse control is also a factor that can affect performance. However, as they reach the maturity of young adulthood, many individuals with AD/HD seem to develop greater impulse control; therefore, they are able to function more successfully.

As they reach the maturity of young adulthood, many individuals with AD/HD seem to develop greater impulse control.

The Payoff for Perfectionism

The perfectionism of gifted children with AD/HD has less chance to pay off than when the gifted child is without an attention deficit. The persistence of the AD/HD child in the face of susceptibility to distraction is less likely to lead to achievement. The notion that bright individuals can always achieve the goal if they are persistent enough is a perfectionistic fallacy. Starting with high expectations, an attempt is made, but achievement is less than expected. The resulting frustration and anxiety over performance can lead to progressive performance decrements over time.

Anxiety over performance can take many forms: fear of failure, an "I can't do it" attitude, an obsessive set of thoughts about the task, or a compulsion to repeat the task in a perseverative manner. The possibility exists that gifted AD/HD children are more susceptible to the forms of anxiety noted above than gifted children without AD/HD, but that hypothesis has not been empirically tested.

The gifted child without AD/HD has a much higher likelihood of achievement than the gifted child with AD/HD if strong motivation, equal degrees of perfectionism, and a distracting environment in which to accomplish the task are the same. More frequent payoff to gifted children without AD/HD means that their persistent perfectionism will be reinforced. Their self-esteem and belief in their ability to accomplish the goal (the positive side of perfectionism) will be strengthened. The gifted child with AD/HD, on the other hand, is more likely to experience the negative side of perfectionism. The marked contrast between high expectations and the reality of consistently inconsistent performance can leave the child's self-esteem looking like a car after a demolition derby, and may, over time, discourage the child from attempting to try to do his or her best.

The Perfectionistic Paradox

One treatment technique in psychology is called prescribing the symptom. Rather than contend with an individual's perfectionism and potentially create resistance or entrench the individual in a defensive position, the strategy is to let this person continue to be perfectionistic, but modify the conscious thoughts about what it means to be the perfect perfectionist. This will increase the likelihood of behavioral change. The perfectionistic paradox is that ***to be the best you can be, you must still accomplish this in the real world, which means acknowledging that there is a certain probability of error.*** Some variables, like the weather, are simply outside of our control. Thus, we can only **approximate** the perfect solution to a problem.

Accepting the Perfectionistic Paradox, we can come closest to achieving a perfect solution if we **plan to minimize error**. The most straightforward way to accomplish that is to approach a goal through a gradual system of successive steps leading to the goal. The probability of error decreases as we achieve each progressive step successfully. Perhaps the following metaphoric fable can illustrate the situation.

Pop's Rule

At a beach house with a deck elevated above the sand, a large extended family gathered to baste themselves with oil of sacrifice to the sun god and seek respite from stress. Stress soon found them in its chameleon-like way (as it often does) and took the form of a multitude of merry munchkins constantly crying out to be carried up and down the stairs. The scene resembled the flow from an ant colony to and from the picnic. By mid-afternoon, the adults and the older children were approaching the limits of their frustration tolerance as sherpas to sand-covered toddlers.

The beloved grandfather of the clan (affectionately known as "Pop") ceased being an observer and rose from the shaded comfort of his white wicker rocking chair to go to the tool shed. This aging Huckleberry Finn

soon had a swarm of workers wielding hammers and saws to the task of building half-steps and a-low handrail along one side of the staircase. Thus, the origin of ***Pop's Rule: If they are not yet able to climb the whole staircase, help them to build half-steps so they can make it to the top on their own.***

Pop's Rule encourages the growth of independence, self-esteem, and pride in accomplishment. It conveys that ***you can do it*** without either an unrealistic expectation (too large a single step) or the impression that outside assistance is a prerequisite to accomplishment (being carried). Pop's Rule is a sequential thinker's problem-solving technique that can assist the non-sequential thinker through a cognitive cul-de-sac and generalize well to new situations.

To help a gifted child learn to operate on the basis of Pop's Rule requires starting with a child who wants to solve a problem. It is important to find a happy medium between dependence-inducing over-protection and unrealistic expectations of too much independence. Adults can assist a child without taking over ownership of the problem. Do not carry them up the stairs; help them to build half-steps so they can reach the top themselves.

In one case, Pop's Rule was taught in the course of therapy to a 13-year-old gifted boy with AD/HD who was motivated to learn new problem-solving techniques to avoid his parents' almost constant interventions. Further injury to his already wounded self-esteem was prevented by letting him define the need for his parents' assistance. When he felt he could not quite manage the next step, he would ask them to help design what had to be done; then he would politely ask them to leave so that he might build his science project himself. Many gifted individuals, particularly introverts, prefer to work in private. It enhances their sense of accomplishment to resolve the problem themselves and then show the finished product to the world. The boy was able to obtain limited consults from his parents, and yet retain his pride and the individual ownership of his creation.

The example above also demonstrates an important point.The application of Pop's Rule helped this child to create his science project with only limited consultation (as opposed to frequent intervention) from his parents. The process of learning to apply Pop's Rule was a series of half-steps down from the uncertain tight-rope of his dependence upon them to the solid ground of independent creation with minimum support. Pop's Rule can thus be used both to build steps of new learning and independence, and to step away from dependence in a gradual way.

Gifted AD/HD children who are of the Predominantly Impulsive Type are much more likely to make an impulsive first choice at problem solution. If that choice fixates in a negative perfectionistic fashion, rather than allowing for review of alternative solutions, these children are less likely to achieve the best solution; this usually leads to negative consequences, such as frustration, and lowered self-esteem. Teaching them to use Pop's Rule will help to counteract their tendency to react impulsively. If they use a stepwise strategy, they are more likely to avoid an erroneous or non-optimal solution to the problem. Helping them to generalize Pop's Rule to new situations and to apply it independently will take time, but it is a worthwhile technique in a repertoire of problem-solving approaches.

Carefully structuring the environment, including our adult behavior, allows all AD/HD and gifted children to minimize anxiety and frustration by decreasing externally imposed demands that goal achievement occur in a single step. Many AD/HD and gifted children already make those demands upon themselves. Helping them to learn Pop's Rule increases the possibility that they will experience the positive side of perfectionism more often.

To return to our example of the Taoist concept of yin and yang, of the balance between the positive and negative, the ideal would be for any individual, particularly the gifted individual with AD/HD, to accept the reality of errors as part of the balance between justifiable pride in accomplishment and occasional frustration when that accomplishment is not *yet* achieved. There will always be another step to take toward perfection. Absolute perfection may be impossible to attain. However, striving for excellence or doing one's best at the current step is a worthy, attainable goal.

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ADHD or Gifted?

A Dialogue with Sharon Lind and Sue Lind Silverman

LS: *I'd like to begin by apologizing, Sharon, for editorial changes I made in your article "Are We Mislabeling Overexcitable Children" [UOG, 1993, 5(5A)] without securing your approval before the issue went to press. I didn't mean to put words in your mouth that misconstrued your meaning. Through this dialogue, I hope our readers will gain clarification of your perspective on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).*

ADHD is one of the most complicated syndromes to diagnose. There are legitimate cases, and illegitimate cases, and I don't think the classroom teacher is in a position to be able to tell the difference. So I usually recommend that parents contact a clinician who has studied both ADHD and giftedness and can distinguish between the two. How do you see it?

> **More and more children who are showing characteristics of overexcitability are being identified by classroom teachers, counselors and parents as ADHD.**

SL: I don't disagree with anything you are saying. However, I believe that more and more children who are showing characteristics of overexcitability are being identified by classroom teachers, counselors and parents as ADHD. That concerns me. I definitely want us to be able to distinguish, if we can, between ADHD and giftedness because the way we treat a child with ADHD is certainly different from the way we treat a child who is overexcitable, highly gifted, or intense. I truly believe that there are overexcitable gifted children who also have ADHD and perhaps other kinds of disabilities as well. My concern is that the cause of some of the mislabeled behavior is inappropriate classroom environment. If that is the case, I would like to see the school try to solve the problem first. I think we need to take a few weeks, or a month at the most, to try to alter some of the activities that are going on at school before we refer to a clinician. If we go immediately to a professional, then the teacher, parent or child may feel disempowered—unable to handle it themselves—and that takes away their internal locus of control. Continually seeking out experts detracts from the self-efficacy of the individuals involved.

I'm not recommending that we bypass the clinician. But first we need to find out if it's new behavior. If it is new, we want to see if the school is contributing to the "misbehavior" and what can be done to change the environment. And I am also saying that we need to talk with the children. It astounds me how many interventions and decisions are made about children without their input. So what I am saying is that we should start with the school, get input from the child, and, if nothing improves in a short period of time, then, absolutely, contact a clinician.

LS: *What advice do you give to the teacher?*

SL: Try to figure out when these behaviors occur. Are they, for example, during certain activities? Some children only act out during subjects they already know. Vary the kinds of curriculum available to the child. Take into consideration the child's learning style.

I'm not saying that there aren't children who need clinicians, but I think a lot of students are being labeled ADHD in the school or by their pediatrician. I can't tell you how many times I hear the parent say that Mrs. Jones thinks little Sally is ADHD at school so they take her to Dr. Tiddlywinks and Dr. Tiddlywinks puts her on Ritalin. That scares me to death.

LS: *That happens a lot. I've heard this from pediatricians, too. My greatest concern is that medications are not being monitored properly by physicians. A specialist needs to be in charge of determining the type of medication, the proper dosage and changes in dosage needed over time. Most pediatricians are not specialists in ADHD; they need to work in conjunction with a psychologist, psychiatrist or therapist who specializes in ADD/ADHD.*

SL: The other warning we have to give to parents is that there aren't that many clinicians out there who really know about giftedness and ADHD. That means we need to give ammunition to those parents about giftedness, asynchronous development, and overexcitabilities, *before* they go to the clinician. Otherwise, the clinician might assume that those behaviors which may reflect intensity, giftedness or overexcitability indicate that the child needs Ritalin instead of an intervention that would not require medication.

LS: *Could you go over the original list of 13 questions parents and teachers should ask, pointing out any discrepancies between what was printed in the article and what you meant?*

(Continued on page 14)

SL: OK.

1. Could the behaviors be in response to inappropriate placement, insufficient challenge or lack of intellectual peers? Does the child show these behaviors at home?

That's fine. One of the things we see when it isn't ADHD is that it is only happening at school. We know with ADHD that the behaviors tend to be less at home but one of the things I'm hearing from parents of the gifted is that they don't see *any* of these behaviors at home; the children only show them at school. That's a clue to me that it's school-related.

2. Could lack of interest, boredom or irrelevancy play a part? Is the child unable to concentrate even when interested in the activity?

The question is, why aren't they able to concentrate? We know that some ADHD kids can't concentrate on certain kinds of activities, but one of the distinctions, I think, is that gifted children have stronger passions. The real ADHD gifted child may still have trouble concentrating on these, whereas we can't get highly gifted children away from their passions.

LS: *Yes, although I have seen true ADHD gifted kids who have a phenomenal attention span as long as they are in* ***total control*** *of the situation. That really throws the parents because they say, "My child could concentrate for eight hours on something." But that kind of concentration could also be perseveration, sometimes related to ADHD without hyperactivity, which is much more difficult to diagnose.*

SL: Xavier Castellanos spoke in November at the Texas Association for the Gifted Conference about the preliminary results of his research on gifted ADHD boys. He thinks that the ADHD-type behaviors we are so concerned about right now were behaviors that we cherished prior to the Industrial Revolution. These children are the explorers and the risk-takers. Ever since the Industrial Revolution, with the way our education works, and the kinds of things we need in our society, we don't value those behaviors anymore. We need to be sure that these children know their value. Maybe they are perseverating, and truly if they are perseverating that could be a serious emotional problem, but by the same token, it could be a wonderful skill to have in terms of staying with something they're really passionate about. But we usually don't do that. We say, "Now it's time for math."

> ***My concern is that the cause of some of the mislabeled behavior is inappropriate classroom environment. If that is the case, I would like to see the school try to solve the problem first.***

3. Have any curricular modifications been made in an attempt to change the inappropriate behaviors? If so, what has been the result?

That's fine.

4. Has the child been interviewed? What are his or her feelings about the behaviors?

That's an extension of my plea that we need to know what the child thinks.

5. Does the child feel out of control? Do the parents perceive the child to be out of control? (Many children with ADHD do not recognize when they are out of control.)

The distinction I want to make is the difference between the child who feels out of control and the child who is psychomotor overexcitable and loves movement, loves the activity—thinks it's fantastic—as opposed to the kids I've talked to who just hate it because they aren't in control. It's like someone else is in charge of their body.

You added, "Many children with ADHD do not recognize when they are out of control." That's probably true, but I don't want the implication to be that they don't really know what it feels like when it happens. They may not know it at the moment they are out of control, but I believe if you sit down with them they can describe, at least in some instances, how they felt in that situation.

LS: *There are types of hyperactivity where the children* ***never*** *have been in control; being wired all the time is so normal and natural for them that they have no basis of comparison. There are other kids—and these are the ones you're thinking of—that have waves of attention and inattention; they are really upset by the fact that they were thinking about something and then the thought disappeared. But in the more serious cases, the children wouldn't have a clue that they were out of control: those are the kids I was thinking about.*

SL: Absolutely. I don't question that. When we are looking at a list that someone has developed of signs of ADHD, and we see a lot of those key points in the behavior of a child, then we need to get that child to someone who can understand a gifted ADHD person—a doctor or clinician who has that knowledge. But we want to be sure we know the distinction between children who have never experienced being out of control because they are always out of control and the ones who really love activity and the ones who are in and out and feel like they're on somebody else's roller coaster.

6. Has the child been taught strategies to limit stimuli and deal with stress? Has the child been taught appropriate social skills?

Intensely overexcitable kids can be taught some strategies to deal with all of the input that they're getting. But if they don't have those strategies, their behaviors are going to be considered totally inappropriate because they can't cope with all that's going on.

LS: Who's going to do all of this teaching? The teacher?

SL: The counselor should be able to do it and the special education teacher also should be able to teach them.

LS: So you are recommending bringing the special education teacher into the picture?

SL: You have to be careful how you do that, to make sure everyone knows why they are coming in, because there may be a stigma attached to special education teachers. Sometimes physical or occupational therapists can help, too. I'm just saying there are resources available that you can use. In most schools there are teams where specialists all work together. If you are concerned about a child, you bring that child to the team. The problem is that most of those teams don't contain the gifted specialist, and that person should be there as well as the psychologist or the school counselor or the special educator and whoever else is on the team. That's where someone can say, "You know, I had a student like that in my special ed. class who had a lot of trouble with distractibility to light; let me tell you some of the things I did with that child." Qualified specialists do exist in the schools, and if you can solve the problem locally it is better for everybody's self-esteem. The other thing is that in most places it's naive to think that there is anywhere to go, so you had better try to figure out how to solve it locally.

7. Can the child explain in a reasonable fashion why tasks and activities remain unfinished?

I don't have a problem with that one.

8. What prompts the interruptions and excessive talking? Can the child control these behaviors?

The part that you added was "Can the child control these behaviors?" I'm just not comfortable with that statement. It's really important to know if they're doing it because they can't help blurting out or are they doing it because they're intellectually overexcitable?

LS: I think that is a critical piece of the picture because the child who has the ability to control the behavior is probably not a strong candidate for ADHD. Children who can't control their behavior even when they try really hard are probably clearer candidates for ADHD.

SL: That's probably true, but I think it depends on the age of the child. For older students, that may be the case, but the younger students I'm not so sure about.

*LS: Yes, age definitely must be considered. At our last Visual-Spatial Learner Study Group meeting, George Dorry said that ADHD is basically **disinhibition**—lack of impulse control. If we think about it in terms of Dabrowski's theory, it is intensity of stimulation combined with the inability to control one's behavior. George says that as these children get older, they still have the same amount of overstimulation to contend with, but they have greater impulse control. So development plays a part here. In a very young child, we wouldn't expect a great deal of impulse control, but the older the child, the more significant impulsive behavior becomes as a diagnostic factor.*

SL: I agree with you, but one of the things that I have found working with highly intellectually gifted junior high and high school kids is that sometimes they get to the point at which they're so frustrated with the educational system that they just don't try to inhibit themselves. They think, "You know, this system is so screwed up that when I get an idea, I'm just going to say it anyway." The point here is that if you go back to the idea of talking with the child, you will get a clearer picture of the cause of the misbehavior.

9. Can the "inattentive" child repeat the instructions?

It's obvious that they could be doing two other things at the same time. Also, I think there is fairly good evidence that some bright ADHD kids could also repeat the instructions. There is a common misconception that if you don't look like you're paying attention you're not getting the information. And with our bright kids, we know that they can be doing numerous things at once; so can teachers during teachers' meetings!

10. Does the child thrive on working on multiple tasks? Does he or she finish them?

You added the second sentence. I didn't care for this change. I don't see a need for tasks to be finished. The message that I want to say here is that it's OK for people to have learning styles of loving to do more than one thing at once and they will, in fact, finish them when they deem it necessary to finish them. They may never finish them. But working on multiple tasks doesn't have anything to do with whether they finish them or not.

11. Do the behaviors occur at certain times of the day, during certain subjects, with certain

teachers, in certain environments, and not in other circumstances?

That's fine. In other words, are they motivated by that situation. It may not be a pervasive problem, which would then make us assume it's not ADHD.

12. Is the child getting an appropriate amount of teacher attention? Does the child demand constant attention from the teacher? Is he or she capable of working alone?

I think that "inappropriate acting-out behaviors" sometimes occur because of not getting teacher attention. In many cases, teachers have the idea that the gifted kids can take care of themselves, so they don't tend to be asked questions, they don't answer questions and they aren't given the same amount of attention. That could be one reason for the misbehavior. That's why it's there.

You added, "Does the child demand constant attention from the teacher?" It depends on the motivation for the constant attention. It could be intellectual overexcitability. It could be that the teacher is not giving them any attention. It could be ADHD. It could be that there is a terrible problem at home.

You also added, "Is he or she capable of working alone?" If you put it within the context of the rest of this, it's fine, but you could be talking about just a dependent child as opposed to an attention deficit child, so that's confusing. It's not clear what that means.

LS: They're all related to each other. So the second part of the question would be, ***"Do you as the teacher feel that it's constant attention-getting behavior? Is the frequency of the behavior much more than you would get from other bright kids.?"*** *And then,* ***"Is the child only able to work when he or she is getting your attention?"*** That wording would have been clearer.

13. SL: OK. Then the one that was left out was, **"Is the child just demonstrating his or her personality, type of giftedness or intensity?"** which is sort of a conclusionary question.

LS: It wasn't a question that could be answered in the same way as the others. How would the teacher know? All of the questions can be answered by observation except that one. So the other questions represent an observation scale for teachers. If you modify any of those areas, you can see if it makes a difference.

I am as convinced as you are that many of the problems originate in the classroom. What confuses me about your position is that if the problem stems from the classroom, what makes you think that the classroom teacher can solve it?

SL: I don't think the classroom teacher can solve it alone, but I believe that most educational systems can and I think we need to give them a chance to try. What happens is that we are asking the classroom teacher to solve the problem on her own. She has a lot of resources she can rely on: the parents, the child, the counselor, other specialists in the school. We need to give them a chance to try that first. For most classroom teachers, the idea that part of the behavior is related to giftedness is new information, so sometimes merely learning about giftedness makes them rethink what they're doing. It's more threatening for the teacher to have a medical or clinical professional advise them than for a parent or fellow educator to say, "Perhaps you would like to read this article about overexcitabilities," or "Perhaps we could work this out as a team." The more often we're able to do that, the more likely we are to get the teacher involved and the more likely that teacher will be to help the next gifted child who looks like he or she has ADHD.

WHY ARE YOU HERE, GUNTHER?
I, UM... I WANT TO DISCUSS MY PROBLEMS, MISS PHELPS
MISS PHELPS SCHOOL COUNSELOR
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WHAT 'PROBLEMS' DO YOU WANT TO DISCUSS?
ALL OF THOSE
39

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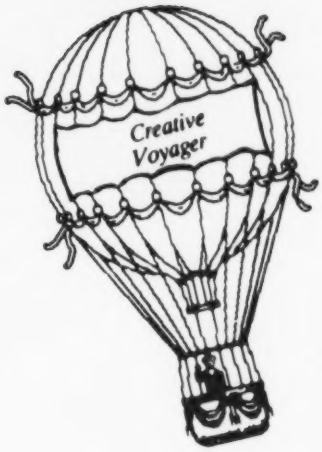

Creative Ventures And Encounters

Jerry Flack

Tour Guide

See the U.S.A. in a Brand New Way

Summer is a time for family trips and travel and on this creative journey we will meet one of the most imaginative persons working in art today, Japan's Mitsumasa Anno. *Anno's USA* is a wonderful picture book as well as a genuine, red-white-and-blue, Fourth-of-July tribute to this great land by a man who has long appreciated its history, art, literature, music, and popular culture. In Anno's art, we see America through the eyes of a visitor who savors its immense geography, the grandeur and splendor of its natural landmarks, its robust people, and its rich, multicultural traditions.

Anno's USA is a wordless picture book, but it would be a great error to believe it is only for young children. The beauty of the book is that it can be enjoyed at many levels of sophistication. Anno's delicate watercolors will no doubt charm prereaders, but the book also serves as a genuine challenge to well-educated adults. Readers need a background in American history, literature, and folklore to truly appreciate the breadth of the artist's celebration of the American land and its people. Preparatory to his personal journey across the United States, Anno intensely studied American literature, history, geography, music, art, folklore, and culture; in the pages of *Anno's USA* he reveals more about our country than most Americans know. Readers of Anno's visual feast will witness the making of classic American movies in Monument Valley; visit the Alamo and the Taos Pueblo; spy Tom Sawyer suckering his friends into whitewashing a fence; note James Whistler's Mother sitting for a portrait; join a Preservation Hall jazz concert in progress; be present for the signing of the Declaration of Independence at Philadelphia; observe the selling of Manhattan Island; and, attend Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Travelers of these pages can also scout raucous scenes from Leonard Bernstein's "West Side Story" and the Boston Tea Party, plus a tender moment from Robert McCloskey's *Make Way for Ducklings*.

Whether your family travel this summer is by car, plane, train or is confined to the imagination while sitting in the living room on a lazy summer Sunday afternoon, here are some creative ways to enjoy *Anno's USA*. The questions and prompts begin easily for the youngest readers and become increasingly more difficult.

The traveler making the journey across America begins in a boat and shortly changes to ride a horse. Can you find him on every doublepage in the book?

How many different kinds of transportation can you find in each doublepage scene?

Find a game or a fun activity in each scene. How many different games can you see being played throughout the book?

Find an animal in each doublepage scene. Lots of animals have escaped from the Central Park Zoo and are hiding in one scene. Can you find a zebra, a bear, a rabbit, and a squirrel? How many animals can be found?

Find a scene that reveals a landmark or setting you have visited.

Find the scene that is geographically nearest to you.

(Continued on page 18)

SEE THE U.S.A. continued from page 17

What states are first visited by Anno on his journey? (Hawaii and Alaska)

How many cities can you find and name? (San Francisco is the first large city he visits.)

Can you find a Halloween pumpkin? Santa Claus?

Can you spy a wedding in progress? How about a bank robbery? A quilting bee?

See how many of these famous characters you can locate?

Little Orphan Annie and Daddy Warbucks
Lucy, Charlie Brown, and Snoopy
Paul Bunyan
The creatures from ***Where the Wild Things Are***
Superman

Find the recreation of Grant Wood's ***American Gothic.*** *Find Mark Twain as a riverboat pilot. Locate Betsy* Ross. *Where do you see Davy Crockett? Detect the gunfight at the O.K. Corral. Find the visual allusion to Hemingway's* ***The Old Man and the Sea****, an artist's portrait of Albert Einstein, and a famous painting by Andrew Wyeth.*

Anno's USA is a very versatile book that parents will have as much fun with as their children. It represents a most creative way to share with our children the richness of their country, and it is a painless way for parents to take a refresher course in American history and humanities.

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Dorothy Knopper

ANTENNA . . . .

Current Developments in Gifted Education

Turnabout children is the term Mary MacCracken (1986) gives to kids with learning disabilities. In her book of that name, she says, *"The label is the least important part... It is the child himself who matters"* (p. 20). She goes on to say that these children have more protective devices than most, and..."*if they weren't intelligent, they wouldn't worry about it because they wouldn't be so painfully aware*" (p. 20). She discusses the ..."*silent cry for help from these children who, given the opportunity, will startle you with their insights, sensitivity, intelligence, humor, and ingenuity*" (p. 21).

MacCracken's comments apply to many children who must be labeled in order to get the special services they deserve. While she doesn't specifically mention gifted students, her description of turnabout children and intelligence would certainly seem to include them.

Calls and letters from parents have changed over the years from an underlying tone of both frustration and humility to an ever-increasing sense of urgency and indignation, as well as anger at the injustice of a system that labels children inappropriately or services them inadequately. More and more frequently, parents describe their gifted youngsters who have learning disabilities and ask why there are so few resources for them. They say that their children are at risk because they are either treated like special education students who are not gifted, or gifted children who have no disabilities.

Fortunately, current literature in the field of gifted education (including *Understanding Our Gifted*) is addressing the critical topic of double labeled children. Also federal funds, through the Jacob K. Javits Gifted and Talented Students Education Program, have been made available for research projects which include gifted/learning-disabled students. However, optimism is dimmed by possible obstacles:

• School districts may not be able to be reimbursed twice for the same student. • Some students are not achieving below grade level because *their gift masks the disability and their disability masks the gift* (Baum, 1994, p.11) and, because they don't flag our attention, they are difficult to find. • Some gifted/learning-disabled high school students who are unable to pass state exams in areas of their disability are denied regular diplomas, even though they may be superior in all other areas.

According to Baum (1994), ...*The most important goal we can have for the field is to find an advocate to represent each and every gifted/learning-disabled student to assure that they receive what they need to address their disabilities as well as the guidance they deserve to nurture their special gifts and talents.* (p.15) Wouldn't it be wonderful if our twice exceptional students could receive the consistent support to emerge from their journey through the school maze as turned about children?

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Dorothy Knopper, M.A., is a private consultant for gifted education in Colorado, author of ***Parent Education: Parents as Partners***, and publisher of ***Understanding Our Gifted.***

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December 31, 1994. MERF offers Awards for Excellence of $500 each to authors of research papers relating to intelligence or intellectual giftedness. By December 31st, 5 copies of each paper published in a refereed journal or presented at a juried conference since January 1, 1991 should be submitted to Joan E. Bauman, Ph.D., 4636 Candleglow Drive, St. Louis, MO 63129, (314) 487-3029.

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NEXT ISSUE

FOCUS:
MAINSTREAMING THE GIFTED

How Gifted Kids Can Survive in "Inclusion" Classrooms
Susan Winebrenner, M.S.

Challenging Ben
Barbara Gilman, M.S., & Linda Greene, M.A.

Those who believe in our ability do more than stimulate us. They create for us an atmosphere in which it becomes easier to succeed.

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UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED®

Dedicated to helping gifted children reach their full potential

July-August, 1994

Volume 6, Issue 6

How Gifted Kids Can Survive in "Inclusion" Classrooms

Susan Winebrenner, M.S.

The term "gifted" has become politically incorrect. Programs for gifted students are being cut back or eliminated outright. The greatest perceived need in education is to "restructure" schools so "equity" can be achieved by creating conditions in which "all students can learn." Educational programs that include ability grouping are expected to restructure by placing all students in totally mixed-ability classrooms, since historically, those placed in lower-ability groups have not made as much learning progress as those placed in higher ability groups. Since the assumption in all this rhetoric is that gifted students are already learning, they find themselves at the bottom of the needs continuum, appearing to be doing just fine without any special intervention. Teachers, who are desperately trying to empower former special education students to learn, are unlikely to perceive that gifted students have any pressing needs when they may be getting their work done and earning high grades.

Since the term "gifted" evokes so much negative response in an egalitarian political climate, the first step in creating a more positive attitude toward the

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FOCUS ON:

MAINSTREAMING THE GIFTED

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Challenging Ben

Barbara Gilman, M.S., and Linda Greene, M.A.

This article represents a collaborative effort by a specialist in assessment and a second grade public school teacher. Bobbie addresses identification, growth commensurate with ability, and long-term placement issues, while Lin views programming "through a teacher's eyes."

With the current emphasis on the heterogeneous grouping of students in public schools and the concurrent reduction of gifted programs, meeting the needs of gifted students is an increasing challenge. Districts often propose to meet these needs by the "individualization" or "personalization" of curriculum within the regular classroom. Unfortunately, recent studies indicate that this occurs only rarely. "The Classroom Practices Observation Study" (Westburg, Archambault, Dobyns & Salvin, 1993) found no instructional or curricular differentiation in 84% of the instructional activities in which these students participated. Appropriate modification depends upon the teacher's recognition of the student's need, understanding of the approaches successful with gifted students, and

(Continued on page 11)

FROM THE EDITOR

Do you think the editors of *Time* read *Understanding Our Gifted?* Their July 18th cover story was Attention Deficit Disorder, the same topic we featured in May/June. Obviously the subject of ADD/ADHD, so relevant to gifted education, has wide appeal.

This issue of our journal explores "Mainstreaming the Gifted," another critical theme affecting students and teachers as they return to their classrooms this fall. Susan Winebrenner discusses methods for mixed-ability classes; Bobbie Gilman and Lin Greene describe the challenge of a highly gifted child from both consultant's and teacher's perspectives; and our regular columnists present some diverse views.

Check out our expanded editorial advisory board. We're proud to be associated with such expertise.

We value your letters, calls and faxes. Keep them coming!

Dorothy Knopper

UNDERSTANDING OUR GIFTED

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Deirdre V. Lovecky

HIDDEN GIFTED LEARNER

Creativity and Attention Deficit Disorder

Until recently the focus on children with attention deficit disorder (ADD/ADHD) has highlighted behavioral, social and emotional difficulties with rare mention of any strengths. Nevertheless, when strengths are mentioned, creativity is described as a special strength of people with ADD/ADHD (Hallowell & Ratey, 1994; Kelly & Ramundo, 1993; Lovecky, 1994).

In my study of 70 gifted children with ADD/ADHD (Lovecky, 1994), the vast majority exhibited creativity, even youngsters who showed considerable hyperactivity and learning disabilities. What they had more difficulty with was organizing their creative ideas into products, and sustaining enough interest and motivation to finish a project once they had gotten past the novelty of the initial idea.

Hallowell and Ratey (1994) suggested that several elements of the ADD/ADHD mind actually favor the development of creativity. Having greater than average tolerance for chaos fosters creativity because the person can bear the tension of facing the unknown, in order to see something new; also one does not immediately put new sensations and images into a proper place in the mind. There is no proper place, so images are placed alongside other images in unusual patterns that lead to new ways of seeing things, and new ideas.

Impulsivity can be used to do something new. The actual creative impulse comes from nowhere, as does the impulsive action. Being tuned into acting on impulses, thoughts and feelings tends to foster greater creativity.

The ability to intensely focus attention at times is an important and often overlooked aspect of ADD/ADHD. The intense focus, and immersion into the subject matter at hand, can produce impressive results, and also breaks down rigid barriers in the mind as the material is absorbed.

Finally, Hallowell and Ratey mention hyperreactivity of the ADD/ADHD mind. By this they mean that the person is always reacting, moving around ideas, so that new connections are likely to form.

In my work with ADD/ADHD gifted children, I have noted other aspects that foster creativity. Many of these children have trouble getting to the point. They do not organize material in commonly accepted schema, such as sequentially; instead, they associate loosely to questions asked and tend to go off on tangents. These tangents can produce interesting ways of looking at material. Often these children are the most difficult to assess, as many of their answers do not match any responses given in the test manuals yet are very high-level responses.

Children with ADD/ADHD have a high need for stimulation and will stimulate their minds with a constant stream of fact and fantasy. The elaborate intertwining of fantasy material into real life enables them to see new patterns. This is especially true of children who write, compose or draw. Often they report they dream all the time when asleep and daydream much of the time they are awake. In fact, fantasy can intrude to the point that they are not quite sure whether or not things are real, partly because they are also apt to question how we know what we know and what makes things real or not. In addition, they often have hyperactive minds that never stop thinking, even when they are asleep. Part of the reason such minds are creative is that they simply generate more ideas than most people. While many of these ideas may be foolish, the sheer volume also produces some valuable ideas.

Finally, many are distractible. This means they tend not to pay attention to things everyone else notices, but instead to focus intensely on things no one else sees. This can lead to noticing small details or to reversing figure-ground. Thus, they will look at the pattern of light between the leaves and branches of a tree, or the shape of shadows on a wall or listen to the spaces between notes in a melody. This disrupts attention to the larger pattern but produces new images and ideas.

In working with gifted children with ADD/ADHD, it is vitally important to use their creative strengths rather than focusing only on weaknesses. Using creativity enhances learning since they are using familiar style. Also, more focus on creativity can help them overcome weaknesses by finding ways of compensating directly and by learning creative problem-solving techniques. A multi-modal approach combining remediation of some weaknesses and productive

(Continued on page 18)

THE BLESSING
To Joshua

By Barbara Mullins

You are blessed
inquisitive, bright eyed
engaged and in motion
curious
connecting
thinking
a bright star shining more brightly
than any night sky has seen

Challenging
asking profound questions
always too soon
catching me off guard
in errors and unprepared
seeking truth
as if you have always known

But will you be loved
when your brightness shines
illuminating the darkness?
when your questions tire
those not seeking the truth?
When your persistence exhausts
your teachers,
your friends?

Will you be loved when your
brilliance
frightens
those who cannot keep pace?
who cannot fathom needing to know
all
they never thought to ask

Will you wither
over time
wounded, unnourished
unchallenged
fettered
to timelines and years

Can I carry you
between childhood
and the choices
the gift can give

Will I let you be
as you are
unlike others:
complacent
conforming

Will you be shunned
desiring, hungering for closeness
intimacy
you never imagined
only few can give

How will you seem to others
will your mountains
be only pillows
your castles, only chairs
never seeing the gossamer
wings
in the air
all around you

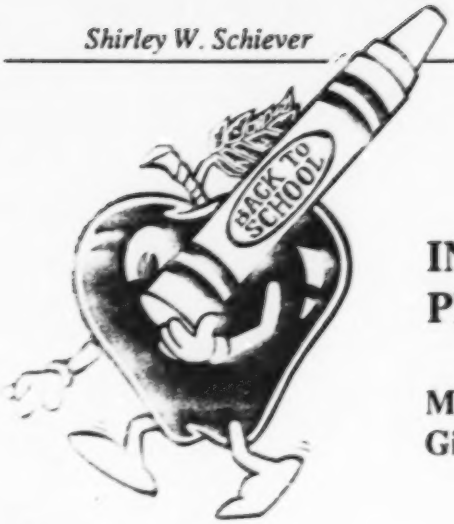
Exhausted in reaching you
a tireless wonder
filled with promise
of the gift you hold
in open hands offering it
to me
your gift of the blessing

It has carried me over times
when I've wondered
who is the teacher
who is the student
for you have shown me God
by your faith
shown me grace
by your forgiveness
shown me trust
by your humility
shown me honor
by your commitment
steadfast in your love

How can I help you
will I find those
who will travel
on this journey
who will explore
without boundaries
the questions you ask
who will love you
in spite of
because of
the peace
you fail to bring

I pray together
for grace
for hands we will
reach
one by one
to ours
celebrating
the gift
the challenge
the intensity
the brightness with which you shine
amidst the night

Barbara Mullins, M.S.Ed., is an education manager in St. Charles, Illinois, and the mother of two gifted children.



INSTRUCTIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Mainstreaming and the Gifted Child

The concept of mainstreaming was developed for the benefit of children with handicapping conditions. Its purposes are to (a) provide models for appropriate behavior, (b) offer educational experiences that are challenging and stimulating, and (c) educate the child in the least restrictive environment. In this article I will examine those purposes in relation to gifted children; I propose to demonstrate how ludicrous is the mainstreaming of gifted children for academic classes.

What models of behavior do gifted children see when they observe their age peers in an academic class? Generally speaking, they see that knowledge and intellect are not valued; knowing and, worse, *questioning* ideas makes one a nerd. Not paying attention to instruction or completing assignments is acceptable to their peers, while completing schoolwork or enjoying learning makes one a "geek." Mainstreaming can encourage gifted children to hide their giftedness as they observe and emulate such behaviors.

By definition, the mainstream classroom is not designed to provide challenge or stimulation for gifted children. Expecting a handicapped child to learn as quickly as mainstream students is considered not only educationally unsound, but downright mean. However, asking gifted children to slow down and, indeed, at times to cease their learning is seen as a natural course of events. If we applied the same principle to sports, we would require the fleet of foot to wear weights, so they could not go faster than the average runner.

In education, the least restrictive environment is one that offers the fewest restraints on learning, one that does not inhibit intellectual or academic development. For gifted students, the least restrictive environment is one in which ideas are valued, depth of exploration and knowing are encouraged, and the content and pace of learning allows progress as dictated by ability and desire. The sports analogy is again useful to examine this idea. Coaches are allowed and expected to select those athletes with the most talent and abilities and to offer them special training to further develop such talents and abilities. No apologies are made to those who don't make the varsity team. No one spends undue amounts of time worrying about the children who are not as athletically adept, who see selected individuals given recognition, special training, and small-group instruction to increase their skills. Why is this so different from offering an appropriate curriculum and environment to intellectually gifted students?

When discussing mainstreaming for the gifted, I suggest we use the purposes or goals of mainstreaming to develop our response. Role models for bright children include practicing professionals engaged in solving significant and substantive problems. Mentors and guest speakers can fulfill this need. Models for challenging and stimulating curriculum within an appropriate environment are available, as is teacher training to implement the models. The least restrictive environment for gifted students is one that allows their full, holistic development—intellectual, moral, social, and academic. To achieve the goals of mainstreaming for gifted students, sound educational practices based on the learning needs of this population must be implemented. Anything less is unequal and unfair.

Shirley W. Schiever, Ph.D., is a curriculum specialist at the Fine Arts Magnet School in Tucson, Arizona, and the author of ***A Comprehensive Approach to Teaching Thinking***.

Stephanie S. Tolan

THE READING ROOM

Last time we looked at science fiction writer Orson Scott Card's "Ender" trilogy, *Ender's Game*, *Speaker for the Dead* and *Xenocide*. Those three books are readily recognizable "plastic and metal" sci-fi; they take place in the future and involve space travel. Card's "Alvin Maker" trilogy (*Seventh Son*, *Red Prophet* and *Prentice Alvin*) is a little harder to categorize.

It appears to take place on earth, on the North American continent, a little over 200 years ago. Though the spellings are often odd, readers recognize names (Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Ta-Kumsah) and places (The Wobbish, Tippy-canoe and Hio Rivers). One important character, the itinerant story-teller, occasional poet and would-be prophet called Taleswapper, is really, we are told, William Blake. William Henry Harrison is a major villain. Napoleon and Lafayette play important roles in the final volume.

Perhaps it is the concept of parallel universes that accounts for the similarities, however, because in spite of those similarities these books most definitely do not take place in 18th-century America. Part of the lure is the tantalizing likeness that leads the reader to wonder what America's present would be like if the past had been as Card creates it here.

In *Seventh Son*, Card quickly establishes the main difference between this world and ours and gives us Alvin, the main character. Alvin is born into a world in which magic works, where people have "knacks," psychic abilities of varying sorts--*dowsers* who can find water, *sparks* who can start fires, *torches* who can look into a person's "heart fire" and see the many possible paths of the future. But the person with the greatest power is the seventh son of a seventh son. Alvin is such a child, born in a flood as his family is moving west, and the main business of the trilogy is to see whether Alvin is strong enough to live up to his gifts.

Seventh Son provides the story of Alvin's childhood and is filled with large issues and concepts (as is typical of Card's work). There are conflicts among white settlers (e.g., traditional religion vs. the folk magic of hexes and knacks) between whites and reds (a desire to subdue the earth and other people vs. a need to live in harmony with natural rhythms) and, as in any novel, between people. The central narrative question (the foundation of all three books) is whether Alvin can discover his knack and learn to use it before he is overcome by his enemy, "the unmaker" (the devil? entropy?).

In the second book, *The Red Prophet*, the focus is on the Indians, their warrior-leader Ta-Kumsa and his brother, the ex-drunk now pacifist spiritual leader, Tenska-Tawa, and how the conflict between Indians and settlers can be handled. Alvin learns that his gift for "making" and his life vision, are entwined with the future of the red people.

In the final book, *Prentice Alvin*, Alvin grows to adulthood, and the central conflicts between people widen to include the future of black slaves.

As ever Card, himself a Mormon, treats spiritual and religious matters with respect, passion and fairness, giving the reader much to ponder. One of the central questions the books address is whether the life energy of earth is lost when humans subjugate nature, animals and other humans to their individual will. The wonderfully told, exciting and suspenseful story will lure bright young readers on; the intellectual issues will nourish their need to address important issues, think deep thoughts and come to their own conclusions.

Stephanie Tolan, from Columbus, Ohio, is a noted author of children's books and one of the authors of the award-winning book, *Guiding the Gifted Child*.

Jim Delisle

KALEIDOSCOPE

Schools of Choice: Decisions, Decisions

Except for preschool and college, parents and children seldom have choices as to what public schools students will attend. In rural areas, there may be no choice at all, as the only alternative to the single public school in the vicinity may be home schooling. In small cities and suburbs, "neighborhood schools" are often still in vogue; you attend the school closest to your front door. Urban areas may offer magnet schools, neighborhood schools, or all manner of other awkward combinations to comply with federal rules on desegregation or equity.

Suffice it to say there is no agreed upon method of school management. In fact, it has been only recently that the issue of "who goes where" in our public schools has garnered any real interest at all.

Now, an enterprising idea called "Schools of Choice" has taken hold in some regions of the country. Although its exact operation differs from place to place, the idea behind schools of choice is often the same: individual schools or school districts will "compete" for students, enticing students to attend their institution because it is better than any other one around.

Sounds great, huh? Teachers and administrators will package a curriculum that caters to the needs of every child; they will upgrade both instructional skills and equipment to "meet the challenges of the next century" (a common advertising slogan in school choice literature); they will promise you the world, educationally speaking, in exchange for your child and the state subsidy that accompanies him or her to school. In such a businesslike environment, only the strongest will survive, leaving less competitive schools with few students and little reason to exist.

. . . Therein lies the problem. For as surely as you will find schools of choice that work for the students within their walls, you will locate another school—perhaps as close as just down the street—where resources limit the ability to compete for students. Thus, as more and more students flock to the "good" school, the other schools are left behind with fewer students and, ultimately, even more meager resources than they had before. Unlike business, though, these schools won't close up shop, they will merely languish, creating a pool of "have nots" where no one—parents, kids, educators—expects very much.

Instead of having schools *of* choice, I would like to consider schools *with* choice. The difference between the two is more a philosophical one than anything else; it implies that in order to improve education, you work *within* the school for positive change instead of pulling your kids from their friends and neighbors to go shopping elsewhere for a finer curriculum.

Working together as teams, parents, educators, and community leaders *whose only agenda is excellence* plan educational options that challenge both the most and least able students under their roof. If financial resources are limited—they usually are—consider ways to tap the talents of community members or the coffers of in-town businesses; for until and unless the local community adopts education as a priority for *all* its members to support, there is little hope for anything better than haphazard improvement.

As far as I know, kids are not commodities to be bought and sold like so many shares of IBM stock. Futures trading is fine, but it should be limited to pork bellies and oil reserves, not the lives of our nation's students. If we are to "take stock" in anything, let it be in the improvement of *every* school, not just the select few that schools of choice advocates prefer to highlight.

Jim Delisle, Ph.D., is on the faculty of education at Kent State University and is a 5th-6th grade consulting teacher in Solon, Ohio. The author of five books, Jim is currently working on a new edition of *The Gifted Kids Survival Guide* (with Judy Galbraith).

exceptional learning needs of this group of students may be to eliminate the term altogether. I am suggesting a new category for all students who need a "differentiated" program in the classroom. *DILFAPS* is an acronym for those who are *Discrepant In Learning From Age PeerS*, including all students for whom the regular curriculum, teaching methods or pacing are not appropriate. All *DILFAPS* need different pacing or complexity, and have learning styles that require atypical teaching methods.

Classroom teachers need to be made aware that in a typical mixed-ability classroom, those students who are at greatest risk of learning the *least* are those who already either knew much of the content or could learn even new material in a much shorter time than the other students in the class. As Sylvia Rimm (1986) has pointed out, when learners are denied regular experience with challenging learning, their self-esteem may suffer. The surest path to high self-esteem is to be successful at something the learner has perceived to be difficult. Each time we *steal* a student's *struggle*, we steal the opportunity for him or her to feel capable by stretching to reach worthwhile goals. Our mission is to help teachers understand that all their students, including the most capable in any class, have a right to experience the challenge of learning.

Teachers may not be afraid to find out what highly capable students already know. However, teachers are concerned about what they will have to provide for these kids when what they have planned for the rest of the class is inappropriate. They may predict that they will become entrapped in a situation that will cause them to spend many extra hours planning for this small group of learners. Since today's teachers are already overwhelmed trying to meet the educational, psychological, and social needs of kids with so many learning problems, the prospect of creating more work for themselves is understandably not very appealing. The secret is to help teachers learn how to offer and manage alternate learning experiences for gifted DILFAPS in easily manageable ways that do not create animosity from other students or parents. Guidelines for utilizing several appropriate educational strategies for gifted students are the focus of this article.

Compacting and Differentiating

The first step in providing an appropriate curriculum for gifted students is to eliminate the concept of extra credit. Gifted kids soon learn that if more work is their "prize" for finishing the regular work quickly, they better slow down. Rather than something extra, consider instead a variety of alternate, enriched, or extended learning opportunities. As a regular part of curriculum planning, teachers can incorporate more appropriately challenging activities all students may eventually experience, but which the most capable students should do *instead of* the age-appropriate activities.

Three strategies will be described that teachers can use to provide challenging learning opportunities for gifted students: compacting, differentiating and independent study. *Compacting* allows students who demonstrate previous mastery of certain material to spend less time with the regular curriculum and more time with extension and enrichment opportunities. *Differentiation* makes available learning activities that extend the regular curriculum. *Independent study* allows students to explore a topic of passionate interest, whether or not it is included in the regular curriculum.

A caution to parents seems in order here. If teachers adapt the regular curriculum to provide appropriate challenge for your children, they need parental support in helping the youngsters appreciate how learning to struggle will help them experience the true joys of learning in meaningful and interesting ways. A temporary drop in grades during the "struggle" portion of the learning experience should not result in panic or complaints from students or their parents about perfect grade records being ruined. The most important thing your son or daughter needs to learn in school is *how to learn*! If your child goes off to college without having learned that she is still a worthwhile person even if she has to struggle to learn, she might not know how to deal with the frustration she is sure to encounter in college classes.

Guidelines for compacting and differentiating in pre-testable subject areas

1. Always provide opportunities at the beginning of a unit of study for volunteers to take a pre-test or other type of assessment activity. This might be the same tool that will be used for diagnosing what all students have learned at the conclusion of the chapter or unit.

2. Students who demonstrate mastery are required to work with the large group only when the teacher is teaching concepts they have not mastered. When the class is working on concepts the student has mastered, the student works on alternate activities. Prepare a contract indicating the lessons or activities during which students work with the teacher and the class.

3. Create a choice menu of alternate activities with which students can work on the days they are working more independently. One of the choices is always the "student's own idea". During enrichment times, students are required to follow three

rules in order to maintain their independent status.

- **Don't bother anyone**
- **Don't call attention to yourself**
- **Work on the alternate activities during the entire class period**

The "cost" of not following these rules is to return to work with the larger group for the duration of the unit of work. However, teachers are expected to provide the necessary assistance and instruction to make the alternate activities understandable to those working more independently and to inquire periodically if the child needs assistance.

4. Students' grades or assessment outcomes for this unit come only from demonstrating mastery of the same content as the rest of the class. The grades they earned on the pre-assessment activity for concepts they have already mastered are entered in the teacher's grade book each day the student follows the expected rules during independent work time.

Figure 1

CIVIL WAR STUDY GUIDE

Be prepared to:

1. Discuss the causes of the war.
2. Describe the basis of the economy for the North and the South.

★ **Quiz for 1 and 2 by January 19th** ★

3. Know the meaning of the vocabulary words listed on pages 89, 96, 104, and 115.
4. Complete a map of the states in 1861 to show which states seceded to the Confederacy and which stayed in the Union.
5. Recite from memory Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address."

★ **Quiz for 1-5 by February 1st** ★

6. Describe typical battle conditions which a soldier would be likely to encounter.
7. Narrate a 3-minute biographical sketch of any Civil War personality.

★ **Test for 1-7 by February 15th** ★

Guidelines for compacting and differentiating in areas where prior knowledge is not present

1. Even when gifted students do not know material the class will be studying, compacting is still required because these students need less time than their age peers to learn. For each unit, prepare a study guide such as the one shown in Figure 1 that includes the concepts for which all students in the class will be responsible. These concepts are listed in the order in which they will be taught, with checkpoint dates to indicate times when students are expected to demonstrate that they are keeping up with the study guide timetable.

2. When preparing the unit plan and study guide, make a list of related topics you would like to include if you had the time. At the end of the list of suggested topics, add one that asks students to propose their own ideas.

3. Invite students who have demonstrated in previous units that they are clearly learning faster and deeper than their classmates to choose the study guide format *instead of staying with the class* to learn the required content. These students are required to pay attention to the lesson only during the checkpoint times or when the class is doing extension activities which the teacher wants all students to attend. Students are expected to learn about one of the alternate topics, and their grade for that project replaces the grade they would have earned by doing the regular work the rest of the class is doing.

4. Students are allowed to choose the format they will use to express what they have learned about the alternate topic. Since these "specialists" are already working with more complex ideas, their grade or assessment outcome for their project is based on the level of thinking demonstrated in their research. Teachers are urged to avoid having students do written reports, since writing is tedious for some students whose minds are racing faster than their hands can keep up, and may be perceived as "more work" by the eligible students. An example of a reasonable expectation is for the student to present a 7-10 minute talk to the class accompanied by at least one visual aid. The student is asked to prepare one significant question which is presented to the audience both before and after the presentation to enhance the listeners' attentiveness.

5. Students who opt for the project alternative are expected to follow certain behavioral guidelines. An independent study contract allows the teacher to communicate the essential conditions of independent status, and makes it clear to the student that the price of independence is increased responsibility. Students initial each contingency as they agree to abide by it, and sign at the bottom to indicate acceptance of all the terms. Students who do not honor the terms of the contract return to work with the larger group.

Independent Study of a Student's Passion

Most exceptionally capable DILFAPS are intensely curious. They are interested in learning about a variety of topics. Teachers who are willing to allow such students to become involved in long-term independent studies find that the more absorbed these kids become in their topic, the less likely they are to ask the teacher the dreaded question, "I'm done....Now what should I do?" An easy-to-manage opportunity is for the student to become involved in an ongoing investigation that would lead to becoming a specialist or "resident expert" on a particular topic. When the student returns to the same topic of choice over an extended period of time, the teacher is relieved from making specific extension activities available. Of course, the teacher will want to plan several short conferences with specialists in order to monitor the student's progress and level of frustration or satisfaction.

1. Teachers provide a form such as the Topic Browsing Planner in Figure 2 for students to use for 10 school days to find the range of information available about their topics and to choose smaller suptopics on which to develop expertise.

2. When students have completed the Planner, they indicate their choice of specialty topics by working on a Resident Expert Planner. (See Figure 3).

3. Students in the primary grades may choose to represent what they've learned in a non-written form, such as creating pictures on blank transparency sheets and using the pictures to describe to the class what they have learned.

4. Students in the higher grades may investigate a topic of their choice and present the information to their classmates or other appropriate audiences in novel ways.

5. Students who are pressured into choosing topics prematurely may lose interest in completing the investigation. It is very important that enough time be allotted for students to explore the information available about specific topics before they are required to choose specific subtopics for more in-depth study.

6. Whether or not students ever complete their independent study is not cause for concern. There may be no more rewarding situation than when a student discovers a topic about which he or she wants to learn endlessly. Teachers simply expect a 10-minute progress report every two weeks so the student can share a part of learning

Figure 2

TOPIC BROWSING PLANNER

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

GENERAL TOPIC OF INTEREST: _____

SUBTOPICS I WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT (use the back for more ideas):

_____ _____

_____ _____

HOW I MIGHT COLLECT INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOPIC:

INFORMATION SOURCES	CALL NUMBER, AUTHOR, OR DATE	TITLE	WHERE I FOUND IT
Books:			
Periodicals: (magazines, newspapers, etc.)			
Other Sources: (TV, radio, etc.)			

PROFESSIONALS WITH WHOM I MIGHT CONDUCT INTERVIEWS:

Name Profession Workplace

_____

_____

_____

EXPERIMENTS OR SURVEYS I MIGHT CONDUCT: _____

_____

_____

HOW I CAN SHARE WHAT I'VE LEARNED ABOUT ONE SUBTOPIC: _____

_____

_____

with classmates. The reports are often no more sophisticated than a talk accompanied by a visual aid.

Summary

In order for all highly capable students to learn effectively in mixed-ability classrooms, consistent compacting and differentiation of the regular curriculum should be part of the planning and teaching of all units of study. When teachers use methods like those described in this article, they discover that the techniques are highly motivating and useful for many other students besides the identified gifted students. The learning opportunities gifted students need in order to survive as highly motivated learners are totally compatible with emerging theory and practice on effective learning for all students. When teachers observe the exciting outcomes from the compacted and differentiated work of their most capable students, they are encouraged to improve the quality of learning for all their students. Thus, providing academic accommodations for gifted students has the potential to improve the learning experience for all students and set a good example for all teachers and schools to emulate.

Figure 3

UPPER GRADES RESIDENT EXPERT PLANNER

Student's name: _____ Date: _____

The Subtopic I Will Study from the Topic Browsing Planner:

_____

What I Want to Learn About: _____

_____

_____

_____

Sources of Information Used in My Study: _____

_____

_____

_____

The Most Interesting Information I Discovered: _____

_____

_____

_____

How I Will Share What I've Learned with an Audience: _____

_____

_____

_____

Date I Will Be Ready to Share Some Information: _____

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CHALLENGING BEN Continued from page 1

proficiency in handling the demands of classrooms with a greater range of abilities. Clearly, special needs students require more of the teacher's time in today's classroom, and teachers require strategies that are both time-saving and effective. This article addresses one child's individualized programming from the identification of his high abilities to the modifications his teacher used in the classroom. Issues of course and grade acceleration are addressed, as well as whether academic progress was commensurate with ability.

Identification

Ben was evaluated at the Gifted Development Center at the age of 6 years 1 month, using the *Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised* (WISC-R). At that time, he earned a Verbal IQ score of 145, a Performance IQ score of 138, and a Full Scale IQ score of 145, placing him in the highly gifted range of intellectual ability. Because Ben earned ceiling level scores on three subtests, it appeared that his ability

might exceed the range of the WISC-R and it was recommended that he be retested on the *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale* (Form L-M), which has a considerably higher ceiling. The Stanford-Binet was administered at age 7-5 and Ben attained a mental age of 14, beyond the norms in the manual. Using the formula in the manual, Ben's IQ score was estimated to be 192, well into the extraordinarily gifted (160+) range. According to the normal curve of distribution, an IQ score of 180 theoretically should occur once in every million individuals.

Ben was accepted into his school's TAG program on the basis of his private test scores. Subsequent testing at his school on the *Screening Assessment for Gifted Elementary Students-Primary Level* (SAGES) yielded a score of 133. A second group IQ test, the *Cognitive Abilities Test* (CogAT), was also administered and he earned a Verbal score of 134 and a Quantitative score of 138. Highly gifted children frequently earn significantly lower scores on group intelligence tests. The vast discrepancies between Ben's scores on the Binet and the CogAT underscore the need for individual testing. These children can provide multiple, complex answers on individually administered oral tests and often miss simpler, forced-choice questions they tend to make more complex (Pegnato & Birch, 1959). Many newer tests have lower ceilings (they have omitted questions only gifted students could answer) or deemphasize verbal abilities (Silverman, 1986), making assessment of the highly gifted difficult.

Individual achievement test scores at ages 6-1 and 7-9 on the *Peabody Individual Achievement Test-Revised* (PIAT-R) and the *Kaufman Test of Educational Achievement* (K-TEA) were at the ceiling level of the tests, confirming the considerably higher individual IQ scores. On the K-TEA, administered in the spring of second grade, Ben earned a Battery Composite score of 160 (highest possible score). Computed grade equivalents placed him at the 10th grade level in math, 8th grade level in reading, and the 5th grade level in spelling, creating a significant challenge for his teacher, Lin Greene. Not surprisingly, Ben had complained in the past of boredom in the classroom and of already knowing most of the material before it was taught. His parents were concerned that he was becoming lazy because expectations were too low.

Programming

As Ben's second-grade teacher, my plan for him started before we had ever met. I was aware that he had been identified for our Talented and Gifted Program (TAG) in first grade. This is unusual for a first grader at our school. I also knew that his parents had been disappointed with the opportunities presented Ben thus far.

Being a believer in goal setting for myself as well as my children, I set my personal goal to increase Ben's learning opportunities with individual programming that would be different, but not usually separate from his peers. I wanted to act as his mentor, guiding his choices and making sure that the challenge was always there. If I was unsuccessful, or Ben and his parents were unhappy, it was NOT going to be from my lack of planning or trying the unusual.

When I spoke with his parents in the opening weeks of school, I felt encouraged. They respected my knowledge and experience, and also heartily supported my more unusual ideas without an already set program of their own in mind. I felt unthreatened and appreciated—just what a teacher needs when embarking on the untried.

In the early months of school, a brief form was being prepared for use with TAG students that would serve as an individual education plan (IEP). I scheduled an appointment with Ben's parents to complete the form. Together, we devised a year-long plan, emphasizing modification in Ben's areas of strength and encouraging growth in his weaker areas. Ben was brought in for part of the half-hour meeting and each person provided valuable input. For example, Ben had completed a classroom exercise that included the question, "What subject is most difficult for you?" He had told his parents that he wrote, "Math," because he was afraid to admit that no subject was difficult for him.

We chose Math, Language Arts and Science to be our focus areas (see IEP form, p.13). Since "follow through" was indicated as a weaker area, part of my job would be to make the end result of each project something Ben really wanted to achieve.

Using informal assessment, i.e., listening to Ben read and questioning his comprehension of the text, I determined that fourth-grade level reading gave him an opportunity for growth and was still enjoyable. In spelling, I tested Ben using a 1000 word list drawn from sources of commonly misspelled words (Carroll, Davies & Richman, 1971; Jacobson, 1985). Starting with those Ben missed, we made up his individual spelling lists. Ben joined the class in their spelling activities, but used his own words which were mainly fourth grade and above.

I think it's important to note that his peers, who considered him "Mr. Answer Man," were involved in Ben's achievements. They came to realize that this year, Ben was working as hard as they were, just on other things. Without this realization, fostered by Ben's presentations to the class and his project updates, he would have

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

NAME Ben

AGE 7

GRADE 2

TEACHER L. Greene

Strong Subject Area(s):
(✓) Math
(✓) Language Arts
(✓) Science
( ) Social Studies/Geography
(✓) Reading
( ) Spelling
( ) Art
( ) Music (instrumental)
( ) Music (general)
( ) Other _____

Student's Strength(s):
(✓) Verbal
(✓) Broad, intense interests
(✓) Abstract thinking ability
(✓) Creative
(✓) Rapid, efficient learner
( ) Intense concentration; long attention span; persistent at meaning-laden tasks
( ) Less need for task structure
( ) Self-motivator

Subject area(s) chosen to provide advanced study: Math, Language Arts, Science

GOALS: ① To advance in Language Art areas, especially in follow-through activities, i.e., shadowing a medical person with a log and presentation.
② To have Ben achieving at his level in Math.
③ Encouraging Ben's Enthusiasm for Science and public speaking.

ACTIVITIES: ① Have TAG set up shadow experience. Teacher sees to follow up
② Testing in Math with placement into a 3rd grade room for Math on a trial basis at first
③ Enter Ben into Science Fair
④ Enter Ben into the Toastmaster's Program

EVALUATION

Performance
(✓) Objectives met as stated
( ) Made progress
( ) No observable progress

Decisions
(✓) Continue objectives Accelerate to 4th grade
( ) Postpone
( ) Discontinue objectives

eventually become isolated from his class.

Part of my job is to make everyone feel important, but not more important than anyone else. I used the following methods to insure that this also occurred with Ben. 1) As I asked various children to recap what was expected of them in their next assignment, Ben would also be asked to state aloud what he was asked to accomplish. This helped Ben's goal setting process, but also let his peers know that he was being asked to do his best, too. 2) When Ben and I would discuss the results of his oral presentation, I'd use the "teachable moment" to give him ideas of what he might still say to a particular child who had asked a question of him or had mentioned a personal insight during Ben's Q and A time. This provided Ben the words so that he could give compliments to the other children, making them feel important. Soon, Ben could see these opportunities himself, without me. 3) The children respected me and my total acceptance of Ben with his unique talents, because I also equally recognized their talents.

In Ben's case, my preventative methods worked. Ben didn't experience "backlash" from other children. There was no need to have class meetings or lunch sessions with cliques of children. In the past, I have found these methods very helpful, especially when repeated at infrequent intervals.

Ben was not isolated in our class; quite the opposite was true. I really believe the children learned from his reports because I tried to link them to their units, just on a higher level. He completed several independent research projects on subjects he would enjoy because of his love of science and medicine. When we studied Hawaii, he studied leprosy and the leper colony in the Hawaiian islands. During our Alaskan unit, Ben's research at the library was on the aurora borealis. After his report, the children eagerly identified pictures they found based on his given information. When Ben shadowed a surgeon, he wrote and displayed his findings about the harm various sized bullets would cause. The surgeon came from L.A. and had written much about the subject. Ben, a target shooter himself, found this fascinating. When Ben shared his display with the class, it gave them insight into Ben as a unique, multi-talented peer.

A quick overview test of our second-grade Math program plus classroom observations showed me that, except for "regrouping," Ben had already attained the skills that I'd teach that year. It was evident that minimal teaching would be necessary for Ben to attain these additional skills. Even our team's Challenge Math program, used to broaden the knowledge of top second graders, was not going to be enough. To Ben, it was "cinchy"!

Ben's parents and I felt that placement in a third-grade classroom for Math made the best use of his time and mine. A willing third-grade teacher agreed to have him join her class. He caught on to the mathematical functions he hadn't been introduced to before and became one of her top students. Ben looked forward to going each day and eagerly shared his work with me. Computation was slow at first, but gained strength with a little

practice. Even the homework became part of the routine and was done without a struggle. Remembering the various Math times turned out to be the most difficult aspect for us both, but an alarm watch came to the rescue.

In Reading, I encouraged books well above grade level, but of his choosing. Non-fiction was always his first love and I would suggest a balance of biographies and acclaimed fiction as well. He made a television with a moving scroll of pictures and script, painted main ideas from chapters, created dioramas, story trees, author mobiles, etc. In each case it was always Ben, with my guidance, who established the deadlines. Once set, we could structure his daily goals together. After I realized that we needed to review this daily, he came to understand what I expected of him and neither of us then ended up frustrated. We did need to modify the class schedule since Ben was in his third grade classroom when we were reading and didn't need to participate in our Math. We also tried several locations, looking for a quiet work space. Sometimes the library or a conference room was used. Eventually, Ben became accustomed to working and staying focused on his different tasks just by sitting at another table in our room.

Ben's participation with the fifth graders in "Toastmasters" was especially rewarding for us all. He looked forward to the event each week, even though it met during his lunch time. His love of public speaking was given technique and encouragement. He used what he was taught when he would share with our class his scientific reading, etc. Best of all, our class joined him for his graduation and were especially proud that his fifth-grade "peers" had chosen him to present a speech for the final ceremony. The children knew this was special and showed their pride that Ben was from **their** room!

Looking back, I know there were times I pushed when I should have been more patient. It was a learning experience for us both. Ben grew to realize that I would always be expecting his best effort on each task...no coasting. I learned to go over the goals before each worktime and not to assume that they were in place from a previous time. Frequent, but informal contact was always kept with Ben's parents. I can't emphasize enough what positive support they were for me. Most of all, Ben and I just enjoyed each other and each new accomplishment we shared together.

Evidence of Growth Commensurate With Ability

Throughout Ben's second-grade year, he performed well and earned excellent grades in his modified program. Are there other indicators, however, that we can use to assess whether his academic progress was appropriate for his level of ability? A benchmark for appropriate growth for gifted students has been adopted by the Colorado State Advisory Committee for the Gifted and Talented (Silverman, 1990). Students should progress at least one year in achievement level during a regular school year. This does not mean that Ben should merely have mastered second-grade work, but that he should have progressed the equivalent of one year in each subject area from the level he had already achieved by the beginning of second grade. Since Ben was given achievement tests during the summer following kindergarten, in April of second grade and April of fourth grade, we can roughly evaluate his progress by comparing grade equivalents. These equate Ben's performance in the major academic areas with the average performance of children at various grade levels. (An equivalent of 10.9 means the 9th month of 10th grade.)

Ben scored at the ceiling level of the PIAT-R in two subtests, suggesting his achievement level to be beyond the limits of the test. His PIAT-R and K-TEA scores are, therefore, only marginally comparable, but the K-TEA brief and long forms are highly correlated. Ben's test scores not only indicate "sufficient" progress by state standards, but the extremely rapid progress possible for highly gifted students. Ben's level of achievement is clearly higher than what he was taught, even with modified curriculum.

PIAT-R 7/16/91, age 6-1		K-TEA Brief Form 4/24/93, age 7-9	K-TEA Long Form 4/25/94, age 8	
		Grade Equivalents		
Math	2.6	10.9	Math Application	11.3
			Math Computation	10.7
Reading	3.2	8.5	Reading Comp >	12.9
			Reading Decoding	10.8
Spelling	2.8	5.2	Spelling	10.9

Do we know that he was challenged in the classroom? In a survey of parents of gifted students, Ben's parents highly supported their son's modified programming. They felt the individualized plan addressed his strengths and interests. While they believed Ben would have benefited

from the option to learn third-grade math at a faster pace (he felt he was moving too slowly several months after joining the third-grade math class), they were pleased with his progress and believed his attitude toward school and motivation to work had improved. Lin Greene had made a conscientious effort to eliminate assignments covering material he already knew and to replace them with relevant enrichment or accelerated work. He learned to work harder because his teacher's expectations required effort to satisfy. A special relationship had developed with this teacher as a result.

Ben's level of achievement in the spring of second grade caused his teacher to suggest that he skip third grade and attend fourth grade in the fall. Ben's parents decided to support acceleration, if Ben agreed, knowing that he would not easily "fit in" at any grade level. He had always preferred older friends and had no close buddies in second grade. His social development could best be enhanced by contact with other children with similar interests and concerns, not necessarily children his own age. The choice to accelerate him was based upon concern that he would either lose his motivation for learning if restricted to third grade work or present too great a challenge for the teacher attempting to modify his curriculum. Based upon research that grade acceleration usually produces a positive result if the child concurs with the placement, Ben was allowed to make the final decision. After careful consideration, Ben agreed and a plan was devised to promote him to fourth grade. The plan included an option to return to third grade if he wished after the first month in school. Lin Greene contributed afternoon recesses teaching Ben cursive, and third-grade teachers provided books on Colorado history for him to read during the summer (part of the third-grade curriculum).

Fourth Grade

From the beginning of fourth grade, Ben appeared to be well placed and comfortable with a supportive new teacher, Jane Blakemore. His cursive was initially slow, but increased rapidly. His teacher made it clear that he could print when trying to complete spelling tests or other assignments quickly. A fourth-grade math diagnostic test was given to the class and Ben earned the highest score. He was placed in an accelerated fourth-grade math group, which included basic concepts of Algebra and Geometry. Since he had been studying advanced spelling words in second grade, his teacher agreed to have him study a Challenge Word list (Zaner-Bloser, 1984) each week, with the addition of any words he missed on the regular class pretest. His teacher noted that his sense of humor was a good fit in her class and he interacted well with others. She assigned him a seat close to two other boys with similar interests so that friendships could develop. Of Ben's fourth grade placement, Jane Blakemore (Personal communication, November, 1993) wrote:

After having spent a whole quarter with Ben, I'm positive that deciding to have him skip a grade was the right decision. He gets along well with his peers. I can tell he really feels like a part of our "classroom family." He seems to be challenged by the work and has done quite well in all subject areas. He even has time for three enrichment classes (French, advanced geography, and a writing class).

A negative aspect of Ben's placement emerged near the end of the year when a few students began calling him names such as "multi-media encyclopedia" and "dictionary." Jane Blakemore felt the problem emerged because Ben "speaks like an adult" and might have been worse if he had not been accelerated. She and Lin Greene, who had maintained her supportive relationship with Ben, concluded that he would be better placed in a school for the gifted.

Conclusion

Ben would benefit from placement in a self-contained program or school for the gifted where he would probably function at the top of his class. The faster paced instruction at greater depth would more nearly meet his needs, although he would require an individualized educational plan and possible grade acceleration even in the gifted school environment. In the heterogeneous classroom, grade and subject acceleration will probably be necessary at several points in Ben's education, and frequent pacing difficulties will be likely even after acceleration. As Ben grows older, he will become more divergent in ability from his age peers, and his needs will be more difficult to meet. A self-contained gifted program can enhance social development by providing peers with similar interests and a more accepting environment in which to develop social skills. Ben would be less likely to feel "different" and withdraw from others who consider him to be "weird."

Where these options are not available, however, due to inadequate funding or district philosophy, relevant individualization of curriculum within the heterogeneous classroom can help to preserve motivation and love of learning. A teacher must be resourceful, flexible, and appreciative of the special needs of the gifted. The challenge lies in providing sufficient modification to avoid placing a gifted child "at risk," while still meeting the needs of all students in large, diverse classes.

(Continued on page 17)

IN SEARCH OF SERENDIPITY

Creative Ventures And Encounters

Jerry Flack

Tour Guide

Art Museums to Go

Today's fine picture books are portable art museums that stimulate, delight, and challenge young minds. With each new year, the sophistication, quality and creativity manifested in picture books increases. A trip to the local library can be a creative endeavor and a rewarding experience for young travelers and their parents and teachers. One way to facilitate creative interaction between youth and the wonderful picture books available to them is through a guided study of the works of a dynamic and creative illustrator. One of my personal favorites is Peter Catalanotto.

Catalanotto has illustrated many outstanding picture books by authors such as Cynthia Rylant and George Ella Lyon. He has also illustrated three of his own stories, the delightful *Dylan's Day Out*, *Mr. Mumble*, and a Christmas story, *Christmas Always*.

Catalanotto's work reveals a stunning array of emotions, locales and environments. Flexibility and originality are among his many strengths. For SuAnn Kiser's charming *The Catspring Somersault Flying One-handed Flip Flop*, Catalanotto conjures up all the ebullient charm and interdependent joy one might find on a family farm shared by a mother and father and their 12 children. Alternately, Catalanotto portrays one man's isolation and loneliness in the heart of a big city with delicate poignancy in Cynthia Rylant's *An Angel for Solomon Singer*.

The importance of mentors for gifted young artists is beautifully evoked in Catalanotto's first picture book, *All I See*. This touching story reveals much about the vision of artists and their sources of creative inspiration.

The ethereal quality of Peter Catalanotto's art is found in three books by George Ella Lyon which explore the expansion of time. *Cecil's Story* probes a young boy's experience of waiting for his father to return from the Civil War. In *Who Came Down that Road?*, a young boy asks his mother about others that have traveled the dirt pathway they stroll daily. In page after page, the artist brings Lyon's answer to magical fruition. Grandparents, Civil War soldiers, pioneers, Indians, buffalo, mastodons, woolly mammoths, and even seas traveled the same route. Catalanotto and Lyon team again in *Dreamplace* to tell a similarly magical tale about life at Mesa Verde as it is for today's visitors and as it might have been hundreds of years ago for the Anasazi people.

Catalanotto illustrates his own writing in *Dylan's Day Out*, a witty adventure story about a Dalmatian dog named Dylan who leaves his master's drab kitchen and encounters a colorful world populated with some other remarkable black and white inhabitants. *Mr. Mumble* is equally creative and joyful. Mr. Mumble is everyone's favorite uncle, and his tale represents a humorous lesson on the value of good enunciation. He goes shopping for a dozen bagels, a pound of pears, a can of stew, and an alarm clock. However, because he mumbles so much, he returns home with a dozing beagle, a panda bear, a kangaroo, and an aardvark.

Enjoying Peter Catalanotto's art need not be a passive experience. The creative productive thinking functions

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CHALLENGING BEN Continued from page 15

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ART MUSEUMS TO GO Continued from page 16

of fluency, flexibility, originality and elaboration may be strengthened as young people explore and enjoy his superb art. Before reading *Dylan's Day Out*, ask young people to brainstorm all the black and white objects and living things they can as a fluency exercise. Encourage students to think flexibly, too. Can they imagine other "dream places" Mr. Catalanotto might visit and illustrate besides Mesa Verde? (Perhaps Gettysburg or Lexington and Concord?) Encourage young people to create original picture books celebrating personal accomplishments and magic moments in their own lives just as "Willy" Carper's accomplishment is honored in *The Catspring Somersault Flying One-handed Flip Flop.* Creative students may also use elaboration to continue the adventures of Mr. Mumble. Invite them to extend the list of items Mr. Mumble might have on his shopping list. What "mix-ups" might occur with the items they have added to his list?

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Mary Lynn Baum

from parent to parent

Susan Carson's school district was once a leader in services for gifted children. Recently, however, much of that special programming has been dismantled; the district has adopted a full-inclusion philosophy that aims to serve all children within a main-streamed regular classroom.

Susan now represents parents of gifted children on the district's "inclusive schools committee." Her experiences during the past year reveal the hostility those who question this movement can encounter. *The committee had been operating for eight months before our association even found out about it—the administration knew of our reservations and tried to shut us out of the process. So our first hurdle was to persuade the school board that we should have a voice on the committee.*

The committee was in the final stages of drafting a questionnaire to be distributed throughout the school system to parents, teachers and principals. Although the newly-appointed representatives had asked specifically to have input into the survey and had serious questions about its design, the committee proceeded hastily with distribution.

Susan elaborates, *The questionnaire began with a definition of inclusion that stated, 'All students belong in neighbourhood schools, where they participate with age-appropriate peers.' The questions that followed related primarily to how inclusion was being implemented in a school, not to the fundamental concerns parents and educators might have about the concept of inclusion.*

A brief section at the end did solicit comments about the impact of inclusion and the concerns of respondents. The responses were very interesting. Many parents and teachers had serious questions about how well children's educational needs were being met. I helped prepare a thorough analysis of those responses...only to have the committee throw out all our work! Where we found an overwhelming number of negative responses, those who wrote the report played statistical games to minimize the results.

The committee's final report is yet to be presented. Although she regards both the survey and the process as suspect, Susan feels there have been victories in other, more subtle ways. *We did find allies on the committee. Some, like representatives of the learning disabilities association, are prepared, as we are, to keep raising questions about the potential removal of all special services. Other allies, who work within the school system and had to be more circumspect within the committee, have recently been promoted and are now in a better position to influence future policy.*

Moreover, because we raised issues but maintained our integrity, those at the top are having trouble dismissing us. Despite attempts to marginalize us, we have been shown to be reasonable people. I still fear that the proponents of full-inclusion could gain strength and all special needs classes and programming could be eradicated, but right now I believe there are enough of us to keep the worst from happening.

Mary Lynn Baum, is past president of the Gifted Children's Association of British Columbia, Canada, Editor since 1983 of its newsletter ***Bright Connections***, and the parent of a highly gifted teenager.

CREATIVITY AND ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDER Continued from page 3

development of intellectual and creative strengths provides the most hope for effective work with these children.

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Deirdre V. Lovecky, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Providence,Rhode Island, and a frequent author of articles on giftedness in children and adults.

ANTENNA . . . .

Current Developments in Gifted Education

A simple jingle floated around in the early days of the gifted education advocacy movement:

When we have the wheat all sifted
And we know which are the gifted.
Shall we then accelerate?
Or segregate? Or integrate?
How best are the gifted lifted?
(Source unknown, circa early 1970's)

Our educational jargon has become more sophisticated, but we still have not answered the questions: *How best are the gifted lifted?* And is there one better way to teach all gifted students?

We've tried out many methods over the years: separate classes, pull-out programs, acceleration, enrichment, regular classrooms, mainstreaming and most recently inclusion. We've learned that gifted children are as different from each other as they are from the rest of the student population. So even after 20-plus years of research, we have not been able to agree upon one educational approach that can successfully meet all those diverse needs.

In the midst of all the confusing theories and analysis, two concepts have a critical and positive impact on gifted kids: **communication** and **flexibility**. To figure out what works best for each child, parents, teachers and other school personnel must sit down together, talking and listening to each other. Whatever programming options they choose need not be cast in stone. There must be built-in flexibility so that, if the initial plan (which may have sounded perfect on paper) doesn't work, they can all go back to square one and start over with a different approach—or combine the best of several approaches.

How best are the gifted lifted? I can't respond in rhyme, but my best answer is: If it works, do it! If a method challenges a child, and is practical in terms of time and money, implement it—or at least give it a try.

Dorothy Knopper, M.A., is a private consultant for gifted education in Colorado, author of *Parent Education: Parents as Partners*, and publisher of *Understanding Our Gifted*.

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FALL CONFERENCES

Colorado Association for Gifted & Talented, "Expanding the Vision: Moving From Program to Programming," October 7-8, Red Lion Hotel, Denver. Contact Bonnie Hollowell, 1833 S. Sedalia Circle, Aurora, CO 80017

Mississippi Association for Gifted Children, October 19-21, Ramada Inn-Coliseum, Jackson. Contact Carol Paola, 1513 Westward Drive, Gulfport, MS 39501, (601)864-8520.

Advocacy for Gifted & Talented Education in New York State, Inc., "Building Blocks in the Technopolis, Cooperation, Interaction, and Connection in the Millennium," October 20-22, Binghamton Regency Best Western. Contact Joyce F. McDermott, 4790 Burrstone Road, Syracuse, NY 13215.

Gifted Child Society, Inc., October 1, Montclair State College, New Jersey. Contact Gina Ginsberg Riggs, 190 Rock Road, Glen Rock, NJ 07452-1736, (201)444-6530.

Ohio Association for Gifted Children, "Gifted Children: the Challenge of Change," October 28-29, Holiday Inn Columbus/Worthington Conference Center. Contact Carla Spriestersbach, 5279 Education Drive, Greenville, OH 45331.

National Association for Gifted Children, "General Education & Gifted Education: Creating Harmony," November 9-13, Red Lion Hotel/Marriott Hotel. Contact NAGC, 1155 15th St., N.W., Suite 1002, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 785-4268.

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